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—
Chair

Mr. James Rajotte

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•(1105)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Richard Dupuis): Good morning. I see there is quorum. As clerk, I am going to proceed to the election of a chair and the two vice-chairs. I am going to begin with the election of a chair. I am ready for motions to that effect.

Mr. Crête.

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): I move that Mr. Rajotte be elected chair.

The Clerk: Moved by Mr. Crête that Mr. James Rajotte be elected chair of the committee. Are there any other motions to that effect? No.

[*English*]

I declare Mr. Rajotte duly elected chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

[*Translation*]

(Motion agreed to.)

The Clerk: I am now going to proceed to the election of the first vice-chair, who must, according to the Standing Orders, come from the official opposition. I am ready for motions to that effect.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): I nominate Mr. McTeague.

The Clerk: Moved by Mr. Holland that Mr. McTeague be elected vice-chair of the committee. Are there any other motions to that effect? No.

I declare Mr. McTeague duly elected vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Clerk: I am now going to proceed to the election of the second vice-chair.

Mr. Masse.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): I move that Monsieur Crête be second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Moved by Mr. Masse that Mr. Crête be elected vice-chair of the committee.

There being no other nominations, I declare Mr. Paul Crête duly elected vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)): Thank you very much, everyone, for that unanimous vote of confidence. I think that's the only time I've been unanimously elected to anything.

We are going to proceed right into the agenda, but at the opening I just want to make a few comments.

I've served on this committee, formally and informally, since I was elected in 2000, and I think this committee, since that time, has had a reputation for being very substantive and hard-working, with members who exchanged views very passionately but always respectfully. This committee has also shown a very good working relationship in terms of tackling some very tough issues, but in doing so, always keeping in mind that we're representing all our people here, in Parliament and in the committee. So I hope we would certainly continue that.

I know many of you working on this committee have sat here for some time, so I look forward to continuing to work with you. To the new members, I look forward to getting to know you and working with you as well.

I would just encourage you, especially the members who have served on this committee before, to mentor those who are new members, but also to reach across party lines and start forming friendships and relationships so that when we do discuss some tough issues and have disagreements, we can always do so respectfully.

I want to congratulate the two vice-chairs, Mr. McTeague and Monsieur Crête, for their election. I would just remind Mr. McTeague that now that I'm the chair of the committee, it means that at the annual hockey game tonight he has to let me score at least one goal on him—easier said than done.

At this point, perhaps we could have the clerk, Richard Dupuis, explain his role and Alexandre Roger's role.

The Clerk: I'm going to be the main clerk. Alexandre is beginning with us and we are going to share some files, but I will be the main clerk. So if there are problems, you come to me.

The Chair: Also, I think we should at this point introduce our two main researchers, Dan and Lalita, who have been on the industry committee for as long as I can remember. Dan comes from an economics background and Lalita more from a science and technology background. I think I can fairly state that they are two of the best researchers we have here on Parliament Hill and two of the best researchers the Library of Parliament has to offer. Please, all parties, utilize them to the fullest extent possible.

I believe you all have the agenda in front of you. At this point, we should go through the routine motions. The first is for the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament.

It is moved by Mr. Holland. All in favour, please signify.

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

The Chair: The second motion is a motion establishing a subcommittee on agenda and procedure. At this point I'd like to have a discussion.

In the industry committee in the past we have had a subcommittee, but we often found that the subcommittee would propose something for the agenda, but then the larger committee would propose something else for the agenda.

So one option is to have a subcommittee. A second option is to have all members present and be part of a steering committee, so that the steering committee would in effect be the entire industry committee. That way, if any of you had any issues, you could bring them forward and we could discuss them.

I'm open to comments and suggestions as to which option members prefer.

Mr. McTeague.

• (1110)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Chair, congratulations.

I have not canvassed our members on this issue, but I believe there was a time, certainly when I was on this committee, when there was a steering committee. That's not to take away from the advice and input of various members.

[*Translation*]

We note the presence of Mr. Arthur, who is an independent member. As an independent, he may not be able to sit on a steering committee.

I am of two minds. I think we should maybe have a steering committee that would bring various circumstances and situations to the committee's attention, instead of having a larger committee.

[*English*]

I would suggest it might be better for us to go the route of a steering committee for now. Considering the probability that Mr. Arthur might not be allowed any input—I'm not sure what mechanism is available to him—the steering committee could be modified to allow him to sit on that committee in this case.

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Traditionally we haven't had the steering committee; however, given that last session we had one occasion where I thought it might have been helpful, when we did a study that was far too cumbersome and didn't really result in the work I think we set out to do, I'm not fixed on either situation.

Mr. McTeague raises some very valid concerns, and we'd have to address them specifically I think with some type of input process or availability. But I caution the members who were part of this committee last time, when the study we spent a lot of time on didn't really have a result at the end of the day, that a steering committee might have actually progressed it to some type of fruition, because we spent a lot of time and didn't really get into any answers on anything.

The Chair: Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I think we should formally strike the steering committee, as planned. However, I would follow the same practice as in the past, i.e., it would only be used in an emergency or in very specific circumstances, for example, when we need to settle a technical issue very quickly. Let us pass the motion as is.

As for future business, we should do that all together. If that is done only by the steering committee, when it comes back to the full committee, people have additional arguments to raise, and, at any rate, it gets discussed at the full committee. However, if there are any practical or technical decisions to be made from time to time, we have to have a tool like the steering committee to avoid paralysis.

[*English*]

The Chair: The suggestion is to have the full committee address future business, but then to establish a subcommittee, as Mr. Crête outlined. Is that agreeable?

Do you want to move the motion, Paul?

Mr. Brian Masse: I'd add a minor amendment, just to add "the NDP" instead of "the other opposition party".

The Chair: Well, now that we have the two vice-chairs who are from opposition parties, we would have to add a member of the governing party as well. The vice-chairs are typically a government member and an opposition member. In this case, the committee has decided to elect two vice-chairs who are opposition members.

Mr. Brian Masse: I would add the amendment. There are lots of steering committees that include New Democrats. It's common practice.

The Chair: Just to be clear, then, it would be myself, Mr. McTeague, Monsieur Crête, Mr. Masse, and one member of the Conservative Party.

Do we have a volunteer on the Conservative side?

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): I would do that, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay.

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

The Chair: The motion to receive and publish evidence in the absence of a quorum is moved by Monsieur Lapierre.

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

The Chair: The motion for designating an acting chair is moved by Monsieur Crête.

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

The Chair: The motion for distribution of documents with translation is moved by Mr. Holland.

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

The Chair: Concerning working meals, especially because this committee will typically be sitting from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., at least up until the end of June...

Do we have a mover? Mr. Holland again moves the motion.

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

The Chair: Concerning staff attending in camera meetings, for those of you who are new members, these are meetings in which we decide we're discussing such important business that we have to have our friendly folks in the media outside the room—and anyone else. We have traditionally allowed for one staff person per member in the room.

Mr. Crête.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I think there is a problem with the translation. The English “one staff person” is fine, but the French should say “un membre du personnel”.

Currently, it says that only one member of the MP's staff may be present. Traditionally, it has not been exclusively one MP's staff member. A member of a party's research team should also be allowed to be present.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's very reasonable to me. Is there any objection to that?

Do we have a mover for this? Mr. Fontana.

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

The Chair: Concerning transcripts of in camera meetings, Mr. McTeague moves the motion.

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

The Chair: The motion for notice of substantive motions is that 48 hours' notice be required. Basically this is to allow 48 hours.... The clerk can comment, but my understanding is that if, for example, a member of the committee sends an e-mail to the clerk, then the clerk would disperse it to the members, typically by e-mail, and then the 48 hours would start from the time at which that e-mail is sent to all of us. That's just so we have some time to review a motion before discussing it at committee.

Is there any discussion? Do we have a mover?

Mr. Lapierre moves the motion.

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

The Chair: Number 10 is the time limits for witnesses' statements and questioning. This, I understand, is based upon past practice in the industry committee. People can just read through that. Round one would be seven minutes each; the other three rounds would be five minutes each.

Obviously the unique thing about our committee is that we have an independent member of Parliament. I will make a suggestion, unless there are others who would like to make suggestions. My suggestion is that we not take time away from opposition, because I know opposition members obviously want opportunities to question, especially when ministers come before the committee. I thought we could have, in round three, the second Conservative Party slot allocated to Monsieur Arthur. That's my suggestion, which I'll put before the committee.

Monsieur Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: In my opinion, it is important for the recognized parties to have their turn to speak before the independent MP. I agree that he should be allowed to participate; that is quite acceptable. However, the NDP, which does not have very many opportunities to take the floor, is scheduled to have the floor in round four. In the House, the independent MP represents just 1 out of 308 ridings. He should not take precedence over those who make up 10, 15 or 20 per cent of all MPs. So it seems appropriate to me for the independent member to have the floor when the Conservative Party has its last turn, in round four.

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dan McTeague: The independent member would have to wait 57 minutes to ask a question. That would be practically at the end of the meeting, it seems to me. I know that it's often a matter of limiting the interventions of the witnesses. Perhaps we could have a clear agreement on the number of minutes given to each witness, in every situation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Following on what Monsieur Crête said, I have a concern. Obviously we want the official parties to have the opportunity to speak. Monsieur Arthur was duly elected by the members of his constituency, and I think, as Mr. McTeague just pointed out, even leaving him at the end of round three would probably be at least in the hour period. If it's in round four, it's a bit unfair, in my view, in the sense that he may then never get an opportunity to ask a question, and I think that he, as a member of this committee, should be able to ask questions.

So, Mr. McTeague, are you suggesting round two?

Hon. Dan McTeague: At some point we can be flexible in this, but it is sort of etched in stone for now. It's not conceivable that he'll even be able to ask a question without the intervention of the chair, in certain circumstances, until witnesses have left, so the minimum has to be the third round. It seems to me that if you leave it any longer than that, at least one member of this committee may never have the opportunity to ask a single question.

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I think it's important that Mr. Arthur have an opportunity to ask questions, but I would have to oppose. If we're running down on time, we would end up basically having the same time during that period, and I have a problem with that. If we had a spot moved up in front, then at least there would be a second round before that.

So that is a problem, because at that time there would be the same representation, which isn't the case in the House of Commons.

The Chair: Mr. Fontana.

Hon. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): The case could be made that all elected representatives of the people of Canada should have an opportunity to ask a question in the first two or three rounds. I guess it doesn't really matter at the end of the day; if we want a good working committee, we're all going to do some very good work, so at the end of the day I'm not sure that haggling over five or seven minutes is really going to cause a big difficulty.

I would probably suggest that the NDP get a position on round two and that in round three Mr. Arthur be given a position. If you want to take something away from the Conservative Party in round three, that's your discretion, but at the end of the day I'm not going to get hung up about five minutes for an extra member. Just to recognize what Brian said, moving the NDP up to round two and adding Mr. Arthur to round three would be in the spirit of all working together, and that could be accommodated.

The Chair: To respond to Mr. Masse's point, I would point out that my proposal of having Mr. Arthur in round three is actually forgoing a Conservative Party spot. It's not adding an independent spot; it's actually forgoing the Conservative Party's spot in favour of him. So the NDP would not be five minutes behind. That's just to clarify the point.

Mr. Brian Masse: I understand that logic, but that's your choice. The reality is it would bring a single independent up to a status equal to a political party. That alone is significant. Reflecting the number of seats that we have warrants a different scenario. I do appreciate the attempt you're making, but it is important that it be changed.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, in terms of considering overall opportunities to make sure everybody has a fair and equal opportunity, however we define it, it may be helpful to drop the seven minutes to six minutes on the first round. That would provide more time on the next round to accommodate the New Democrats' Mr. Masse and

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Arthur in round three.

[English]

The Chair: Is that agreeable—six minutes on the first round?

Mr. Brian Masse: On a trial basis, if it works out that I can get in a second round, then that's acceptable. The key to me is getting in the second round, because that's the breaking point, so to speak. I'm satisfied if it happens later on, as long as it happens. That's the critical issue for me.

The Chair: The proposal, then, is to drop round one to six minutes; to add the New Democratic spot to the second round, the end of the second round, for five minutes; and then to allow Mr. Arthur to take round three, the second Conservative spot. That's the proposal.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: For clarification, do we then have one spot in round one and round two?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Arthur, do you want to address speaking times?
[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Ind.): Mr. Chairman, I am an independent MP and when I got here, it was made clear to me that the leadership of these proceedings lies with the political parties. That is a tradition that I respect, and I hope to be able to fit into the process. What you have just proposed to me is generous, and I hope that it will work for everyone. Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: I want to make sure I understand. The length of interventions on round one will be six minutes each and five minutes for the other two rounds, the NDP intervening at the end of the second round of questions and Mr. Arthur at the end of the third round of questions.

A voice: No, it would be the Conservative party's turn.

Mr. Paul Crête: That's fine. I agree with that proposal. I don't want to turn this into a two-hour debate, but I think I'd like to move again that we have seven minutes on the first round. When Dan proposed six minutes, we didn't have the full picture. We gave more time to the NDP and we gave Mr. Arthur a chance to ask some questions. The first round is often an important time to canvass the general opinion of the witnesses. I don't want to get bogged down in procedure, but if everyone agrees, so much the better, and if not, we will simply stick with the six-minute time limit.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): I want to clarify something. If we get to round four, would the New Democratic Party be first in round four, or are we moving the New Democratic Party from round four up to round two?

The Chair: The proposal, as I understand it, would leave the NDP in first spot at round four. Round four would stay exactly as it's written here, so the NDP would have a first spot.

That's the current proposal.

Mr. Colin Carrie: If the NDP are moving up to round two and we're giving up round three, perhaps we can move to number one in round four. Does that sound reasonable? I know—how often do we get there?

Does that sound good?

Mr. Brian Masse: That's fair.

The Chair: Then the only issue, I think, is whether round one is six minutes or seven.

Mr. McTeague.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dan McTeague: I understand full well, Mr. Crête, but if there's no reduction from seven to six minutes, it won't be possible to accommodate the NDP on round two. I know that this is not something we need to debate, as Mr. Crête already said. Perhaps we should be flexible. If it doesn't work, we can revisit the issue later.

Mr. Paul Crête: I suggest that we try a first round of six minutes, to begin with.

• (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: I just want to clarify for all members that it's not written here, but the chair can ask as many questions as he wants, any time he wants.

Just to be clear, round one is six minutes, as outlined; round two is five minutes, but adding the NDP at the end of that round; round three is five minutes each, replacing the Conservative Party with Monsieur Arthur; and in round four, the Conservative Party would move to first place and the New Democratic Party to fourth place.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I just wanted to clarify it.

The Chair: Is it agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That's the full agenda for us here today.

The last thing I do want to talk about, just for a few minutes, is mainly for the next meeting on Thursday morning at 11 a.m. I want all of you to have discussions with your colleagues and with your own staff and to bring forward ideas for the committee to study.

We don't have any bills before the committee. In the last session of Parliament there was an awful lot of legislative work at this committee. Right now we have no pieces of legislation on industry before the House; we have a fairly open agenda, so I want you to bring forward your ideas.

When you do so, I want you to think with respect to ways of getting other parties to agree. It would be nice to have a consensus in terms of the areas of study for us.

On Mr. Masse's point from earlier in the meeting, in the last session a very big study was selected. It was perhaps too broad for the mandate of the committee, or too big. Perhaps we ought to look at doing some smaller studies and accomplishing some things.

I encourage you to get to know the members. As an example, Mr. Fontana has an interest in science and technology issues, so if you have a motion on that issue, you can look to him, perhaps, to support it from his side, and maybe you would want to discuss it with him.

I know Mr. Carrie, Mr. Masse, Mr. Holland, and Mr. McTeague are interested in the auto industry. Monsieur Lapierre in the Bloc is interested in the aerospace industry. Is there something on manufacturing we can do?

Look for areas in which we can do some broad-based studies and be effective and substantive. That's my goal for the committee.

Mr. Fontana, did you want to comment?

Hon. Joe Fontana: That's good guidance, Mr. Chairman, but because we're only here for the next four or five weeks, assuming the schedule stays in place, could I suggest that rather than taking a week just to think about what we might do, we take maybe half an hour—I don't know how long we have the room for—to talk a little bit about some broad issues we might want to discuss?

As the first order of our business, Mr. Chairman, can I suggest that we invite the Minister of Industry here for our next meeting? Surely finding out where the government will go.... We have a budget; we have a throne speech that essentially outlines a number of viewpoints. First and foremost, we would want to talk to the minister as the first item of business, and at the same time talk a little bit about where we want to go in terms of studies and/or particular motions.

I thought perhaps we could establish that next Tuesday, if that's going to be our time. Even though I think we meet Thursdays, too—Tuesdays and Thursdays—we might do some broad work with regard to some of the items we might want to talk about, be they gasoline or manufacturing or even science and technology, or whatever the case may be.

Also, perhaps, if it's not possible today, meeting again on Thursday for the purposes of talking—

The Chair: We are meeting on Thursday.

Hon. Joe Fontana: Okay, we'll meet on Thursday—is that established already?—so that we can talk about that, but can we at least make sure the minister will be here next Tuesday, as the first order of business?

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I'm sure the minister would like to attend. It's just a matter of scheduling, of course, so I would not like, at this time, to commit the minister to being here next Tuesday. But it's something I'd be happy to bring forward.

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Masse is next, and then Monsieur Crête.

Mr. Brian Masse: I know scheduling is difficult, but maybe in the interests.... The minister probably has an interest in meeting his committee; I think it's a great idea that we open up maybe even Wednesday, or a special meeting, if scheduling is a problem. We've done that in the past to ensure that we can have access to the minister. We really should do that; as a first order of business, it would be the thing to do.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Crête.

Mr. Paul Crête: I like the idea of having the minister appear as soon as his schedule permits. We could give him some leeway in terms of choosing a date. I also really liked Mr. Fontana's idea of trying to decide where we want to go. Keep in mind that we just got the estimates and we'll have to deal with them. And if I recall correctly, the House has referred the Privacy Act to us for review.

One of the priorities of the Bloc Québécois will definitely be the current situation of the manufacturing sector. We think we will be able to make recommendations to the government quite quickly. All parties are now dealing with a new reality. Things have changed since the last election. We have to deal with the economic reality of today and the next two years.

Finally, the gasoline issue could be considered in terms of its impact on the economy. Currently, everyone in that economic sector is facing a huge challenge.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, you gave at the outset a fairly broad-brush sketch, if you will, of some of the issues the committee may be interested in. I want to go back to Mr. Fontana's comments, and I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's responses as to the availability of the minister.

As a committee, as you quite rightly pointed out, we don't have bills before us. As a first step, it would be helpful to get an idea of where the minister sees his department and sees the overall economic performance of the country. We haven't had this kind of overview in some time. A lot, of course, has happened, so I would ask the parliamentary secretary, if I could, to get back to us on Thursday with a date—that this be almost a first order of business, just as an idea of where we're going and how we're going to get there.

It's good to have the various recommendations we've talked about. We have had discussions among our own colleagues; there is interest in areas of manufacturing, aerospace, gasoline, and of course research and development, science and technology. Those tend to be areas in which there could be consensus, considering the involvement of other members, but first and foremost, I think it's absolutely imperative that we have the minister here.

The Chair: Monsieur Lapierre.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): I insist on how important it is to meet the minister. I, like perhaps some of my colleagues here, had the benefit of attending a briefing session held by the Department of Industry. In answering each one of my questions, departmental officials said that they were not informed of the department's political direction. I received 28 identical answers to the 28 questions I asked.

Quite simply, it is important to meet with the minister. The perception is that the political direction of the department has not been announced. Perhaps the minister will wish to surprise us, here in committee. It is a priority. As for the rest, I believe that it will be relatively easy to come to a consensus.

I listened to Mr. Crête talk about the manufacturing sector. All regions across the country are affected by the strength of the dollar. The situation is cause for concern and has a major impact on employment. Of course, consumers are victims of gas prices. Certain topics that we will be discussing are obvious. Therefore, we will not need several meetings to set the agenda. However, we must know the minister's position.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: It's clear that manufacturing and fuel prices are very important, but one other thing I would like to see—and not see get lost—is the WHTI's current effect on tourism. This seems to be a category in industry that hasn't received a lot of attention in the past, for whatever reasons. It's important because of the passport issue that's facing us, as well as the price of gasoline that is affecting Canadian tourism right now. Four consecutive studies have shown that the WHTI is going to pose significant economic problems for Canada.

Tourism, auto manufacturing, and aerospace—all that stuff is good, but we're hoping tourism doesn't get lost in this as well.

• (1140)

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I think it would be important, too, in light of the decision to send back to the CRTC...because of the Telecommunications Policy Review Panel. I think it would be a good idea. That would be a nice, simple thing we could move forward, have them come before the committee so we can see what they're recommending as well.

The Chair: Okay.

As the chair, I did come prepared today with topics, and I'm happy to discuss it. We do have the room till one o'clock, so if we want to sit here we can certainly do so.

There were two panels the former government set up that have obviously reported under the new government. I think there's a fair amount of interest there. On the telecommunications panel, I know one member of the committee has already written me on this specific issue. There's also the commercialization panel that reported, and I know this was an interest to members on both sides. The second area I had was manufacturing, considering, obviously, both aerospace and auto, but other areas of manufacturing too.

The third area I had was about the national science policy advice infrastructure to the government; this is very much related to research and development, science and technology. It's also about looking at how we provide science advice. We have a science adviser. Mr. Fontana used to be a parliamentary secretary for science and technology. We've had a minister of state for science and technology in the past. We have a council of science and technology advisers to the industry minister. Are we providing advice in the best manner possible to the government and to Parliament or should it be changed? And that can be fit within a science and technology framework.

The fourth, and frankly, looking at some statements of all members of this committee, was looking at prosperity and competitiveness. Within that I think we could fit certainly research and development, going from basic research to product development to manufacturing. So those were some of the issues I had.

Also, someone raised the main estimates. My understanding is the main estimates have to be done by November 10, 2006. The Privacy Act does have to be done sometime this year. The price of gasoline wasn't on my list, but I was ready for it. So R and D, science and technology, tourism....

I certainly sense it's the will of the committee to invite the industry minister as soon as possible, so I think we'll certainly endeavour to do that. Should we provide some parameters? For instance, this telecommunications panel, the commercialization panel, overall economic performance, manufacturing—do we want to provide some parameters in the letter or do we just want it open-ended for him to...?

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Chair, I think there are at least several areas here that would be of concern to the committee in its receiving of the minister. I think confining him to six or seven areas may prove difficult for the minister himself; he may have other ideas that he wishes to bring forth. I don't think we should hamstring the minister on this, but I am interested specifically in the areas that had been identified, not so much, perhaps, the work that has been done in the past. Prosperity and competitiveness, the fourth point you put forward, could easily be put in the second category of manufacturing that you outlined at the outset.

You've talked about telecommunications. I know there is a resolution by the New Democrats to have a joint committee to look into that decision as already taken by cabinet over the last week. So I think these are things that really underscore the necessity of having the minister here as a first step in order to address the other ones. I think it's safe to say, considering the four or five items that have been raised, those will be issues that will be raised with the minister, and hopefully he can illuminate the committee as to where he sees the Government of Canada.

The Chair: Mr. Shipley.

• (1145)

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is my first time, so I'm just going to ask, as we're laying out issues that are important to talk about.... The agriculture industry, in terms of the development of biodiesel fuels research, and talking about prosperity and how that ripples out into the good of the country for the environment, and what we can do...I think that's a significant issue that we may want to have some discussion about. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Anyone else?

Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Perhaps we can go with Mr. McTeague's proposal and let the minister know which issues we have identified as being the most relevant. Therefore, when he appears before the committee, he will already have had an overview of our concerns. At our meeting on Thursday, perhaps the parliamentary secretary can inform us of the minister's availability, to guide us along.

In my opinion, we have to look into the issue of global competition in the manufacturing industry, as well as research and development. How can we make this industry competitive again? That issue will also affect what we will do with the Free Trade Agreement.

To my mind, this question is one on which the committee can give the government the most profitable advice, given what is ahead of us. Things happen very quickly. In four months, we will already have begun discussions on next year's budget. Therefore, if we want to recommend measures that will help the manufacturing sector become more competitive, we have to start discussing this ahead of time.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have Mr. Fontana and then Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Joe Fontana: Mr. Chairman, if the question was, should the minister come here with prescribed questions and/or answers to some of the concerns of the committee, I think he has now a range or a consensus of views as to what we might want to talk about. But I think it's just as important for a minister to be able to outline the government's agenda with regard to some of these particular issues. I think manufacturing, obviously, research and development, and competitiveness and productivity are very important. I think a good minister would want to do that anyway. I don't think we should hamstring him.

The other thing that is not mentioned, but I know it probably falls within the finance committee, is directly related very much to our ability to be able to compete or to support small business, and especially enterprise with regard to access to capital. Having been around this place for going on 18 years, I know that sometimes other committees do some additional work. But because there is a review of the Bank Act that has to be done by the government, I think by the end of this year—and I know the finance committee will probably undertake it or be the lead on it—the fact is that what happens in the banking, insurance, and securities areas is very much related to how well our industries maintain competitiveness and productivity.

So I would hope that at the end of the day there may be an opportunity for us to get into it as an industry committee. I'm suggesting that we ought to lay out a plan for the next five weeks. We ought to lay out a plan between September and the end of December, and again into the new year, and essentially work to those things. I know there are a lot of things we can do, but I think we ought to be focused in terms of when we want to do some of these particular things. I think we might have a better idea of prioritizing all of that list now on important issues that in fact impact us.

I would suggest that the manufacturing sector obviously will be a great challenge to our country, as well as research and development, or even gasoline or energy prices, and the impact that those might have on our economy.

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: I don't want to make the list exhaustive, but these are certainly recommendations to the minister where the department has made some signals.

As you were, Mr. Chair, I was lobbied, or at least brought information forward to, to the effect of data protection, which the minister may or may not be proceeding with. I don't believe a case has been made for it at this stage. It's important I think that we put this in the wider context of manufacturing, and that the minister, as he appears, be given as much manoeuvrability to explain the situation for many of us here on that particular issue.

Further to what Mr. Fontana has said, the financial services within the context of manufacturing, within the context of encouraging enterprise within Canada, I think are going to become paramount in terms of the overall benchmarks that this committee is going to want to achieve in a very short period of time, to demonstrate to Canadians that we are dealing with issues that are extremely important to them and very relevant in terms of outcomes.

I think that's one of the governing principles of what this committee ought to be looking forward to, and certainly I will be. In terms of the direction to the minister, the list may very well be exhaustive, but it's important I think now to put these on the record. I note the parliamentary secretary is here. I will certainly want to hear from the minister on data protection.

• (1150)

The Chair: By data protection, do you mean protection of personal information?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Data protection, not from the privacy information, but data protection within the context of proposals made to increase the period of time under the patents issue of the pharmaceutical industry.

I understand the current regime in the United States is five and then three for a new system. Under the previous government, Industry Canada had been taking the position that it was eight years. There was no differentiation between the five and three. That's of concern to members. I don't think many of us have heard the case for it. Whether or not the minister will proceed with putting this in terms of regulations is a different matter, but we should hear from the minister before any decision is made.

The Chair: At this point my suggestion would be for us to write the minister and ask him to come forward and generally outline the government's agenda. In this letter we will also identify specifically

topics that have been raised here in this meeting, saying that the industry, science, and technology committee is interested in the following areas, and then outline the areas. So he can come, and he'll have a general mandate, but he'll know some of the issues that we want him to address specifically.

Is that acceptable?

Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I agree with what you are saying. I just want to have clarification on whether or not we are going to finish deciding on the committee's priorities by next Thursday. Next Thursday is probably too early for the minister, but from now to mid-June, we will not be sitting for a long time. We cannot afford to lose time. I would like to know immediately whether or not we are going to decide on our priorities on Thursday, aside from our meeting with the minister, so that we can call witnesses, and so on.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Crête, my wish would be that Mr. Carrie would communicate to the minister as quickly as possible the desire of the committee to have him before us. We'll follow that up with a formal letter from the committee.

I have a list here, which I will pass on to our researchers and they can outline it, but if you have any other topics, for instance, research and development, if you want to add some specific items to that topic, please feel free to submit them to the clerk and the researcher so that we can outline that for Thursday. Then on Thursday we can come forward with a sense of what you would like to study, what your first area of interest is, your second area, your third area, so that—looking at the calendar—towards mid-June we can actually accomplish at least two or three of these and then move forward in the fall.

Does that sound like a reasonable suggestion?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Just as a final note to the parliamentary secretary, given the number of issues that may be raised, it would be helpful if he could also consider the full two hours with the minister. Clearly, it may not be possible to address all of these issues. The minister may be able to do this in his opening speech, cover as much territory as he can, but I think there will be a number of questions to help us in terms of the long-term direction of the committee. So the full two hours would be helpful.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, *c'est tout*.

Thank you.

We'll see you on Thursday morning at 11 a.m. We're adjourned.

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