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## Standing Committee on Natural Resources

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, September 26, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Lee Richardson**

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Tuesday, September 26, 2006

• (1540)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Chad Mariage):** Honourable members of the committee, I see there's a quorum.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), our first order of business in the election of the Chair of the committee.

[English]

I'm ready to receive motions to the effect of the election of chair.

Mr. Trost.

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** I nominate Mr. Lee Richardson.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Trost nominates Mr. Lee Richardson as the chair of the committee. Are there any other motions?

Seeing no other motions, is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Richardson chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** Before inviting Mr. Richardson to take the chair, we will proceed to the election of the first vice-chair.

[Translation]

I am ready to receive motions for the election of the first vice-chair.

[English]

which, according to the rules, has to be a member of the official opposition.

Monsieur St. Amand.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** I'll nominate Allan Tonks.

**The Clerk:** Monsieur St. Amand nominates Mr. Tonks as first vice-chair. Are there any other motions?

Seeing no other motions, is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Clerk:** Congratulations, Mr. Tonks, first vice-chair.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** For the position of second vice-chair, the Standing Orders require that it be a member of an opposition party not being of the official opposition.

Madame DeBellefeuille.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** I move that Ms. Catherine Bell be elected to this position.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** Congratulations, Ms. Bell.

I now invite Mr. Richardson to take the chair.

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC)):** Well, thank you. We will begin.

I first want to welcome everyone back. We have some new members, or at least one new member, and we have Mr. Tonks to welcome back as well.

Can you tell me how to say your name? I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** DeBellefeuille.

**The Chair:** DeBellefeuille, sorry.

And Mr. Russell joins the committee. I welcome you as well.

We also have a new committee assistant who you see at the back, and that is Holly Loranger. Welcome.

In terms of business, we don't have a lot of business. We have had a brief discussion with the former vice-chairs in terms of looking at where we're going in the next week and in the upcoming couple of days. We do have upcoming, I think, a report from our previous session.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages (Committee Researcher):** Yes, there's a summary that is now at French translation. Hopefully we'll get it tomorrow in late afternoon, so if possible I'll try to forward it to the members.

**The Chair:** Okay. It would be a summary of the proceedings of the spring session and of all the witnesses we heard. Much of that was towards the end of finding a topic that we want to pursue over the winter. So we'll look forward to receiving that.

We also have a number of other thoughts on areas we want to discuss. I won't take a long time today, other than to say that I think the book is open at this point. We have a number of suggested areas for discussion, but if there are some you feel particularly strongly about, I would ask you to please advise me, in the next couple of days, of what those would be.

I think we will start off on Thursday with a discussion of that summary, which we hope to have in your hands by Thursday. It's now in translation, but if not, we'll have a general discussion about topics to cover over the fall.

We will have an obligatory consideration of estimates, if that appeals to the committee, and also on October 5, the report of the environment commissioner, Madame G elinas. I think that will be of interest to the committee, and we have taken the liberty of inviting her. Because of her schedule, we had to extend that invitation before the committee met, but that is scheduled for October 5.

Mr. Cullen, did you have a comment?

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** I don't want to get into it today, but just as a reminder, we had a trip planned to Fort McMurray and Calgary. I hope we can get that back on the agenda and do that sometime.

**The Chair:** Thank you for raising that.

The trip was inadvertently cancelled due to problems at the site. We have an open invitation from the Energy Dialogue Group to appear in Calgary. This is a national group that includes industry people, and NGOs as well, who are prepared to give us one-day cram course. Some of us had the opportunity to do that a few years ago. It's really quite a good course, and it gives a sense of where the industry and energy are in the country today. From there, it was convenient to fly out of Calgary, spend the day in Fort McMurray, and be able to return the same day to Ottawa. That would take a couple of days of our lives rather than three or four days. It would be pretty hard to find a place to stay in Fort McMurray these days, anyway.

That seemed to be of interest to most members I've spoken to. If it is, I'll just go quickly around the table to see if everybody's still up for that. I think it would be in the interest of the committee to do it as soon as we can, just because of the weather; it gets a little colder a little earlier up there.

I recall, Mr. Cullen, that we had some difficulty previously with trying to schedule things during a break week. People want to have their break weeks in their constituencies. I think we're still going to have a problem trying to schedule things while the House is sitting. I think the whips are of the view that in a minority government we should be in our places during the session.

Monsieur Ouellet.

• (1545)

[Translation]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, I agree with your idea that we not get into any specific agenda items today, but rather that we consider the agenda from an overall perspective. However, I would like to make one exception. I don't

know if the following suggestion will receive the general endorsement of the committee.

Our plans are to invite the Minister, but it might be a good idea if, sometime between now and next week's meeting, that is before we finalize the agenda and assess the situation, we are notified somehow that the Minister will be available. I don't know if everyone else agrees with me or not, but personally, I think his appearance will be more in the nature of a question and answer session. That being the case, we could prepare questions in advance. Our intention is not to trip him up. We simply want some clear, straightforward answers from him. We could hold a preparatory meeting. One and a half, or even two hours, could be scheduled for the Minister's appearance. Based on past experience, we've found that one hour doesn't give us enough time to address all of the items on the agenda.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, good point.

Mr. Tonks.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Further to that, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if this might be an idea. If we are having the minister come, and we accept the template that has been suggested by Mr. Ouellet, perhaps we could canvass members as to where they would like to see the minister address items of concern—policy development, whatever. Then the chair and the vice-chairs could try to present that in a focused letter, if you will, to give the minister an idea of what the committee's concerned about and where the committee sees itself going. Perhaps that would help the minister to energize the committee with its agenda.

**The Chair:** Yes. This may just rule it out in that way, in any event.

I spoke a moment ago of the estimates. If it is the wish of the committee to review the estimates—and I suspect it is—they have to be reviewed by November 10 or it will be deemed that we didn't want to review them. So that date is pretty close, and maybe we'll just mould these things together.

With other things on the agenda, I doubt that we're going to get to the minister much before then anyway. That's about six weeks from now. So maybe we'll just incorporate these notions, and you start thinking about things you want. That's a very good way to do it because you can pick spots, and when you go to that part of the estimates you can ask questions.

The minister would probably be delighted to have advance notice of your questions, but I don't think it's necessary.

I think we'll move that way. We don't have to leave it to the last minute before November 10 either. Maybe we should think about scheduling an early meeting with the minister to review the estimates, if that's possible. In the short term, I'll ask the parliamentary secretary to come up with some dates for when the minister might appear. There is a pretty clear consensus in the committee that an hour is not enough time, and we would appreciate it if he could find the time in his schedule to give us at least ninety minutes, if not two hours.

I'm going to leave it to the committee until Thursday. I want you to think about what we're going to talk about. We'll go through this summary and other issues.

We should also have a quick visit on the issue of Fort McMurray and when we can go. A couple of days during the break week would be good. We could maybe fly to Calgary on Sunday night, spend Monday in Calgary, go up to Fort McMurray Tuesday morning, and come back here or to your ridings on Tuesday night. That would be the most convenient, but if members don't agree we'll have to pursue another way.

Ms. Bell.

• (1550)

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** So it's the November break week you're thinking of, because the holiday is on a Saturday.

**The Chair:** Yes. It's short notice now.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Otherwise it's Thanksgiving Monday.

**The Chair:** We could do it in the middle of the week. I'm just trying to minimize the weekday time out of your ridings, but it's whatever the committee agrees on. Rather than discuss it now, let's give it some thought, and maybe I'll come up with some possibilities that we can debate on Thursday.

Does anybody have anything they want to discuss or give notice of before Thursday? Great.

Welcome back, and thank you. I look forward to a productive session.

The meeting is adjourned.

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