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Chair

Mr. Lee Richardson

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC)): Thank you to those of you who are here on time. I appreciate your punctuality. We will begin.

First I should explain that the agenda today has been somewhat modified since our last meeting. We were going to hear today from officials of the Department of Natural Resources. Unfortunately the key witness we wanted is unable to attend today due to a medical situation, so they are going to appear on Thursday of this week. That leaves us, then, the committee business of our budget to travel to Fort McMurray, the committee budget, and notices of motion from Mr. Cullen.

I'd like to begin with a discussion of the budget to travel to Fort McMurray. I think it's been circulated to all of you, and maybe I'll just let the clerk explain that a little more.

The Clerk of the Committee: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The budget, as broken down in the back of the document, has been done based on formulas that are essentially management-approved numbers. You obviously budget more than you'll actually need for the trip. For instance, the ticketing fee is a standard \$1,000. We may use the full amount; we may not use the full amount. Another example is the amount for the charter flight. The committee had to budget the price for the entire charter flight, because we have to pay for all the seats that won't be used, but the committee will get back each member's points. Essentially we will redeem that from Members' Travel Services, and so that number will go down significantly once we make the claim to Members' Travel.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Yes, thank you.

I just had a couple of questions. The first one is particularly dumb, but it says here after "Commercial"—on the back of the page—\$2,820 times three persons. But I thought the whole committee or most of the committee was going, and we said 11 people, so where do you get this \$2,820 times three?

The Chair: That would be the clerk, the researcher, and a translator.

Hon. Roy Cullen: What about the members of Parliament?

The Chair: They will be covered by travel points. We agreed to that at a previous meeting.

Hon. Roy Cullen: We'll use travel points.

The Chair: Yes. We're asking each member to use a special for this trip, which will include a trip from wherever they are to Calgary and back to Ottawa and the charter. I think it's about \$400 that will be charged to your travel expense, not out of the MOB but as points.

Hon. Roy Cullen: The charter is presumably to go from Calgary to Fort McMurray and back. Will there be an opportunity to take a helicopter around Fort McMurray?

The Chair: We're currently looking at buses. If it's the wish of the committee, we can have a look at that possibility, but it gets pretty expensive with 14 people.

• (1535)

Hon. Roy Cullen: It's just a way to get the full scope of the operation.

The Chair: I appreciate what you're saying. It's a big place to see. My only concern at this point is the shortage of time, in terms of our committee's approving the budget and then my taking it to the Board of Internal Economy to have it approved. I think we could probably wait until Thursday.

The Clerk: The Liaison Committee meets on Thursday at one o'clock, so that's when we would be appearing.

The Chair: Just for clarification then, we have to approve this or a facsimile thereof at this committee, and then I have to take it to the Liaison Committee to be approved. I was going to suggest that we look into the possibility of a helicopter to see what that would cost, but my sense is that it's going to be pretty prohibitive.

The Clerk: If you like, I can place a call to our logistics person and have her send us numbers while we're in committee.

The Chair: Yes, let's try it today.

Go ahead. I think Ms. Bell was next.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Thank you. For the accommodation and flights and those things, it says 14 persons, and I'm wondering if Mr. Bevington is included in those numbers.

The Clerk: No, he wouldn't be. The committee will pay for the committee members, Mr. Chair, and I've informed Mr. Bevington's assistant that we will make the arrangements, in terms of making sure there is a room available for him, but he would incur the costs of that, unless the committee decides otherwise.

The Chair: Madame deBellefeuille.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): There are 12 of us at the table, but I see that only 11 members will be travelling to Fort McMurray. Who is not coming?

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, I think this point was raised at the last committee meeting, and the Conservative Party commented on it. I do not know whether I can give you any details on this.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: I wrote a letter to the chairman to tell him that we wanted to maintain the representation of the parties in the House. The principle is that either everyone goes, or that there are three conservatives, three liberals and one member from the Bloc and the NDP.

I believe you received this letter, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, I think we discussed it at the last meeting.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Perhaps you missed part of the interpretation, so I will repeat what I said. I sent you a letter explaining that the Bloc Québécois would be taking part in the trip to Fort McMurray if the representation of the parties in the House were respected.

I want to understand why we were talking about 11 members of Parliament, when there are 12 of us at this table. If things do not go as planned, I would like us to review the matter of proportionality. I think the Bloc's message on this was quite clear. I do not know whether or not my colleagues agree.

[English]

The Chair: Would you like to make a motion to that regard? The situation is that Mr. Harris is previously committed and has indicated to the chair that he will be unable to join the committee. If the committee votes to go to Fort McMurray, the committee will go to Fort McMurray without him.

Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: If Mr. Harris can't attend, I wonder if the committee would agree that we could have the other NDP member, Mr. Bevington, come in lieu of him. On the other point,

[Translation]

We discussed this matter today as well, Ms. DeBellefeuille.

[English]

I took the opportunity to speak again to our whip and I think the position of our whip is that we will send no more members than the members on the government side. But apart from that, I don't think our whip is terribly concerned. I gather that in terms of the process, we'll go from here to Liaison Committee and then to the House leaders. I've flagged it for our House leader, but the feedback I'm getting indicates that they're not too excited, as long as the numbers are going to be about the same on the government side and the official opposition side.

The Chair: Would anyone else like to speak to that? You did raise a point, Mr. Cullen, with regard to Mr. Bevington, I presume.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Yes, would that require a formal motion or just an agreement by the committee?

• (1540)

The Chair: I think we would probably be best covered from a payment point of view to make it a motion. I don't have any objection to that, if someone would like to make a motion.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I so move. We're making our own travel points so we're really talking about the hotel.

The Chair: Fine, and we're not having any votes along the way, so I don't have any objection to that.

Mr. Allen, you're seconding that motion?

Okay, we have a motion that essentially Mr. Bevington will travel to Fort McMurray, ostensibly in the place of Mr. Harris.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Fine, it's unanimous.

Welcome to Fort McMurray, Mr. Bevington.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): All committee members can give \$20.

The Chair: We haven't approved the budget yet. That was a sidebar motion.

We still have a motion on the floor to approve the budget. I think maybe we could defer it for a few minutes while the clerk checks with logistics to see whether or not a helicopter or two could be fitted into the plans. That may take a few minutes. If it's all right with the committee, perhaps we could defer this motion for a few minutes and go to the next one while we figure that out. Is that agreeable to everyone?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The next item on the agenda is the committee budget overall, and I understand it's being distributed as I speak. While it's being distributed, perhaps we could get a general overview from the clerk as to how it was put together.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Essentially, this budget is for the study of the oil sands and will allow us to cover the costs of witnesses, because I anticipated that we'd be hearing a lot of witnesses from western Canada. As you'll see, I budgeted for ten witnesses from Calgary and Edmonton and four from unspecified locations. That doesn't tie us to inviting the witnesses from those particular areas; it simply allows us to have a budget for this particular study, so when witnesses make requests to be reimbursed we don't have to go into the operating budget of the committee. I made it so that we're still under the \$40,000 ceiling in order that the chair would not have to appear before liaison, because that's under the mandate; the committee is allowed to approve a budget up to \$40,000. If we exceed that budget in this study, the chair will have to go and defend however much more we need before liaison, but for the time being this would cover us for a good part of the study, if not the entire study.

The Chair: Great.

Are there any questions? Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: It looks fine to me.

In terms of the ordering of the witnesses, something we've talked about, it may be out of order in the context of the budget, but just to flag it—

The Chair: No, I want to discuss it, because it is relevant to this very point.

Many of the early respondents are people who are paying their own way, coincidentally, and in fairness to other witnesses who are going to be subsidized, I think we'll just leave it at that, in terms of who is asking to be reimbursed and who isn't. But I think it is fair to say, if you look at the list, that some of the early witnesses were either people from Ottawa and didn't require expenses, or people who were not going to file a claim. That's until we get this passed.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Okay.

I don't know if it's the same issue, but the sequencing of the witnesses so far seems to be heavily loaded to those who are going to speak to the economic issues. I think I have support within the committee as well, on this side, that maybe early on we should also get some witnesses who will speak to the environmental issues and some of the social issues. We should try to balance it a little more at the front end so we don't have a whole slate of people speaking to the economic issues and then go to Fort McMurray and hear everything about the environment and the social aspects. This way we would be somewhat briefed up on the range of issues, as much as we can, before we go to Fort McMurray.

• (1545)

The Chair: It's a point well taken, and I should tell the committee that Mr. Cullen brought this to my attention when the two of us first received this schedule from the clerk. I'll let the clerk speak to it as well, but my sense of it is that it wasn't quite as it first appeared, that there is some balance.

For example, on the 31st you'll see Dr. Jean-Pierre Revéret, who is appearing at the request of the professor who was recommended by the Bloc and was unable to attend.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Mr. Reveret is a colleague of Ms. Gendron. She is the one who recommended him. There is no final confirmation but I did contact him.

[English]

The Chair: It was my impression that the testimony would be more on the sustainable development side rather than the economic side, Mr. Cullen. We also have BIOCAP appearing, and we have the Pembina Institute appearing earlier on.

Having said that, I take your point as notice, and I'll allow the clerk to speak to it as well

But we have a further revision to the schedule as distributed. The minister is unable to attend on November 7 and will have to appear on the November 9. November 7, which is before we go to Fort McMurray, could be totally dedicated to sustainable development and the environmental side of the issue.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I think that would be a reasonable proposal. We have Pembina and a couple of others on November 7. If we could bring in something on the water issues, the aboriginal issues, the local municipal issues, or whatever, it would then give us a little more information before we leave.

The Chair: We have been in touch with the native people in Fort McMurray, the bands. I gave you a list of the names.

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: I think we could do that on November 7. We'll make an effort to do that on November 7. But at least in that vein, we have quite a good list provided by all the members.

Madam DeBellefeuille.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Does the clerk expect that we will be hearing from witnesses who would analyze the social impacts of speeded-up development on the community of Fort McMurray? There is a great deal of documentation available at this time. Someone would need to take a critical look at what is going on in this community, with drug and alcohol problems, among others. Will we be hearing from any witnesses on the social issues involved?

[English]

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk if he has any lined up.

[Translation]

The Clerk: We received the lists drawn up by the chairman and the committee together. So far, there has been no request of this type. However, this aspect is part of the committee researcher's report. That is one part of the study that will be done.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: It might be a good idea to hear from the mayor of Fort McMurray.

The Clerk: I am in the hands of the committee, Mr. Chairman. If you want to invite the mayor of Fort McMurray, I will give him a call.

[English]

The Chair: Is it the wish of the committee to include others on the social side? Can I get a general sense from the committee? I'm getting some nodding heads, so it seems that we are in general agreement. Very well.

One name has been suggested, the mayor of Fort McMurray, but there are several others. We have also already contacted the chiefs of two native bands in the area, at Fort Chipewyan and Fort McKay, which are very close. We could show those to the committee members, ask if there are any more suggestions, and then get them in by Thursday so that we can make sure the space is covered. We could perhaps do that on November 7 as well, and it might be wise to at least see one of these before we go to Fort McMurray.

Could I ask you then to redouble your efforts to get them to the clerk before the Thursday meeting? We can then decide on which of the probably half a dozen suggestions we will try to accommodate.

I guess that was part of the discussion on the budget.

• (1550)

Hon. Roy Cullen: I'd like to move that we adopt the budget on the hearings. On the travel budget, we can then wait until we hear something about the helicopters.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I'd like to move the budget for witnesses.

The Chair: On the operational budget, I have a motion, seconded by Mr. Harris, that the proposed operational budget in the amount of \$38,800, for the period of October 16 to December 31, 2006, be adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We have approved the committee budget, and we'll wait to hear on the second part of the travel budget. The clerk will be gone for a minute to do that

We can proceed with the orders of the day, committee business, and the notice of motion from the Honourable Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Cullen.

[Translation]

Hon. Roy Cullen: I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman as well as my committee colleagues.

I will start by presenting my motion to reinstate the wind power production incentive.

[English]

In this committee I think we're pretty familiar with these programs, Mr. Chairman. The two that I'll speak to today were dismantled, frozen, or put into limbo by this government.

The wind power production incentive program was designed to encourage the use and development of wind power projects in Canada, something I think is very important.

[Translation]

In light of the fact that wind energy is developing quickly in Canada and that it will be one of the main part of our efforts to diversify our sources of energy over the next 20 years, this is not the time to freeze or cancel such an important program.

The Liberal Party and the Liberal government recognize this fact. That is why, in the 2005 budget, we made a commitment to expand the wind power production incentive by quadrupling the previous program and promising \$200 million over five years.

The private sector is very receptive to this and the comments from industry regarding the program have always been very positive.

[English]

Mr. Chair, the recent report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development stated that the wind power production incentive has stimulated investment. The commissioner goes on to say that there was broad-based support for the program from provincial governments, companies, and utilities. Further, and thanks in part to this program, the Canadian wind energy industry has shown impressive growth with an annual average increase of more than 30% for the last five years. A recent report shows that wind energy firms are optimistic about future growth.

With the proper support and development, wind energy could easily meet 20% of Canada's total electricity needs, based on an initial target of 10,000 megawatts, by 2010. Experience in other countries such as Denmark and Spain is clearly demonstrating that wind energy can make substantive and significant contributions to total electricity supply.

The decision by the Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Chairman, to freeze further funding for this program is imperilling this important industry and is imperilling many jobs and investment.

For example, every one megawatt of installed wind energy capacity in Canada generates \$1.5 million in investment and creates 2.5 direct and 8 indirect person-years of employment. If 5% of Canada's electricity was generated by wind energy by 2015, such development would produce \$19.5 billion in investment and create 32,500 direct and 104,000 indirect person-years of employment.

Therefore, given that this program was being utilized and was effective, and given that we all recognize that wind energy is an important component in Canada's future power supply, we must, in my judgment, immediately reinstate this program. With the support of the committee, I would ask that the Minister of Natural Resources do so immediately.

[Translation]

Shall I present the second motion, Mr. Chairman, or would it be better to discuss the first one first?

[English]

The Chair: I think perhaps it might be better if I interrupt you at this point, Mr. Cullen. It's my opinion that the motions as written are out of order in their present form and wouldn't be accepted by the committee at this point. I could go on to cite Beauchesne's, but it is my opinion, at this point, that the somewhat argumentative nature of the motions makes them out of order.

I would suggest to all committee members that it might be useful to seek the advice of the clerk before giving notices of motions so that they could advise you on the procedural acceptability of such motions.

•(1555)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to hear more from either you or the clerk as to the rationale for not accepting them.

The Chair: It is *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition. It states: "A motion should be neither argumentative, nor in the style of a speech, nor contain unnecessary provisions or objectionable words". That is page 174, citation 565. The chair finds that this motion is argumentative in the style of a speech and contains unnecessary provisions or objectionable words.

That doesn't prevent you from bringing back the motion in a slightly different form, but I am ruling it out of order today.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Could we make an amendment on the floor right now?

The Chair: No, you'll have to give notice of any motion.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Notice of a new motion?

The Chair: This motion is out of order.

Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): I would appreciate some clarification on what portion or snippet of the motion you find argumentative or objectionable. Why exactly do you wish to rule it out of order?

With respect, I don't read the motion as being unduly argumentative.

The Chair: I will refer it to the clerk, whose ruling I have just cited. Perhaps you could explain it further.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, it's not out of order by much. Members know that when giving a notice to the Journals Branch, for instance, preambles aren't generally accepted. I examined the motion as written and determined that the debatable part would be the final sentence of each substantive motion. In the EnerGuide motion, it would be: "that the committee, in the interest of sound public policy". That would be the motion. In the other one it would be: "that the committee call upon the government and the Minister of Natural Resources to immediately reinstate the full funding of the EnerGuide program." Those would be the motions.

If the committee's intention would be to report these motions, if adopted, back to the House, then I would suggest that the initial part preceding the motion part be set off from the bottom motion and included as part of a report. As a stand-alone motion, I don't think it can stand, because of Beauchesne's and the precedents that have been accepted.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: With respect, Mr. Chair, and to the clerk, I don't know how you could argue this, or on what precedent you might be relying. I've seen many motions in many committees, and there is normally a contextual introduction. To go straight into the motion presumes that everybody is fully up to speed on what we're talking about.

I want to challenge the chair's decision. How do we go about that?

•(1600)

The Chair: I'm prepared to entertain another possibility. I think the committee can unanimously do what it wants to. The committee could waive notice of a motion with less argumentative language. In respect to Mr. St. Amand, I think it's argumentative to suggest that this was done for political reasons, or as a result of a reckless decision. That's my view. Whether or not you agree, it's my opinion and that of the clerk as well.

Mr. Harris, do you want to speak to that?

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Chair, thank you.

I want to maybe agree with the part Mr. Cullen said in his previous statement, to the effect that we take the assumption that most members of the committee are fully aware of and familiar with this issue.

I think I would like to apply that reasoning to the motion itself, the wording of it, where it's called a reckless decision. Quite frankly, I'm not as familiar with the wind energy system as perhaps Mr. Cullen is, and I would say that I'm probably not alone on this committee. Before I would vote on a motion like this, which makes assumptions about the program in the motion, I would like to be a little more aware and more educated about wind energy so that I could intelligently debate the motion.

At the end of the day I may agree with the member that maybe it is a reckless decision. At the end of the day I may not agree with him. But I would not be prepared to accept the wording of this motion based on, maybe, the singular knowledge of Mr. Cullen. I think that

while everyone probably has an idea about wind energy and its benefits or deficits, there are some of us who know a whole lot more about it than the others.

If you look at what the motion's asking of the government, it's a fairly substantial motion. I don't think it should be arbitrarily debated without having the full resources of knowledge of the industry a little more distributed throughout the committee. I'd be happy to debate it, but I'd like to have the benefit of hearing some experts here to tell us a little bit more about the industry before we decide arbitrarily whether it's a reckless decision or not.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Thibault.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This discussion, presumably, has happened extensively in Parliament, because the member voted for the budget implementation measures and the other actions that removed this funding. At that time he must have had confidence and have had a full debate and full questioning and all the benefit through his caucus and through Parliament, to know about these things prior to removing the budget.

It seems to me we're at a little bit of an impasse. But let's say this motion went through or a motion resembling this. It goes through and it's reported to the House and then you have that debate. You have that full debate in the House of Commons; it continues the process. It seems to me that we're at a little bit of an impasse, and perhaps the wording here isn't the best advisable wording for a motion or a report of a committee. But if we go through the process and the member challenges the chair and if the opposition votes against the government and the challenge wins, then that motion goes through.

The alternative would be to have unanimous consent and give the member a few minutes to rewrite the motion in a manner that might be more acceptable, then that it be presented at this very meeting of the committee. In that sense, it might be a better way to move forward.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

•(1605)

Hon. Roy Cullen: I was going to say that in fairness, if there's a compromise we can work on, I'm happy to take out a couple of the more animated words. But the motions have been with the committee for about seven or eight days now and we had no indication that they might be out of order. We've had witnesses on both these programs and we've had ample time to do the research.

If there's a compromise in the wind, I'm happy to take out some of the more colourful language and do it that way. For example, on the wind power, we could say that the committee recognizes the Conservatives "have frozen the popular and effective wind power production incentive program. From the result of this decision, the industry has been thrown into disarray, putting jobs and future investment at risk. The committee calls upon the government and the minister to immediately reinstate full funding for this program."

It seems to me every motion I've dealt with in the past had somewhat of a preamble. To say that the motion would only have the last sentence doesn't give anybody any context. I would accept, perhaps, that some of the language is a bit colourful. Do you think we could do it that way?

The Chair: I'm at the will of the committee.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Chairman, I think there might be a compromise. Mr. Cullen's a reasonable man. Maybe it is worth having a debate about this. I would like to suggest that maybe instead of using the word "reinstate", you use the word "reconsider", which would lead to a debate on it in the House. At the end of the debate, there would be a vote. How's that for a compromise? Perhaps we could all be more comfortable with that.

The Chair: Mr. Tonks, go ahead, please.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I think that when Mr. Cullen drafted this motion, there were two things. One was that at the last meeting of the committee, we had the Commissioner of the Environment's report in which she stated that officials from Treasury Board and from the department should come before the committee to answer questions with respect to some of the substantive programs. You recall that we had a bit of a discussion; there were no motions passed, but it was very clear there was a consensus that officials should be here.

I think that Mr. Cullen was presuming, when the motion was drafted—and I don't mean to presume that I can infer what he had in mind.... I would have drafted this motion against the deputy who would be coming in, and I would have used the motion as a guide for questioning, and not only as a guide for myself but as a guide for members of the committee, about the EnerGuide program and about the wind power programs.

The fact is that this whole process has been truncated. The drafting—if I'm correct in the inference I've drawn—and even the process of extracting information and validating the inferences I'm drawing from the motion have been truncated by the fact that we don't have officials here.

Now, surely we can understand that there is an issue with respect to the two programs, which was raised by the Commissioner of the Environment. It would seem to me you have one of two choices: one, you refer this back to Mr. Cullen to redraft it, against the fact that at the next meeting we're going to have officials here; or two, you can redraft it right now, and we can have a consensus with respect to the two substantive programs, very simply, that we ask the appropriate officials to reinstate the programs. That can go for debate at the House, but I would suggest that it will be debate in the absence of questions that can be answered by officials. The committee will have to determine whether it wants to delay this particular proceeding.

My suggestion would be that we make an effort at redrafting it very quickly and then poll the committee to see whether they're satisfied that there's enough information to discuss it. It's always up to members of the committee to defer if there isn't enough information, or if there are inappropriate inferences and so on, and

to table the motions. That can all be done, but nothing can happen unless we make a decision based on accurate assumptions.

I think my assumptions are correct, and I hope Mr. Cullen agrees that this debate would have been very focused had we had officials. We don't have the officials. Thus, Mr. Harris is saying, look, I can't extract any information; I can't accept those inferences as correct unless I have officials here.

So I think just to be practical, pragmatic, and fair in terms of process—because this is going to be a long committee—let's be clear in terms of the processes we're putting in place. In the absence of the officials, let Mr. Cullen see if he can redraft it. If we're satisfied, let's discuss it. If we're not satisfied that either the drafting or the information that we have can be brought to bear on the issue, it can be tabled or it can be deferred. There are a number of motions that can be had. If we don't do something, we're going to be at an impasse, and I don't suggest that's healthy for the committee.

So my suggestion would be to let Mr. Cullen take a crack at some redrafting here. We can decide whether it's appropriate to go on. If it isn't, then we have some motions to table it, and we have the officials in, and we have it at the next meeting, which will be Thursday, Mr. Chair. So let's not bend ourselves too far out of shape on this one.

• (1610)

The Chair: I think those are very good points. I should say at the outset that I appreciate your efforts in trying to bring some civility to the discussion. I regret that you weren't advised that the motions were out of order prior to the meeting. I think we could have gotten over a lot of this in the meantime simply with some minor revisions, perhaps as suggested by Mr. Harris.

But we're into it now, so I'll hear the people in the order of the speakers list, and we have Monsieur Paradis next.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Paradis (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): I really don't have anything new to add, except to say that I am in full agreement with Mr. Harris regarding changing the wording of the motion. In my humble opinion, I think it would be possible to reach a consensus if we were to talk about reconsidering funding rather than reinstating the program. That would be more appropriate. That would enable us to have an exploratory debate that would make some sense.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Ouellet.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): I am inclined to agree with Mr. Tonks. I think it is important that we move forward with our work. If we are constantly postponing things, we will never make any decisions.

Although I am new to this committee, I have worked on committees for a number of years for the party. I think the idea of rewording the motion a little is quite acceptable. Of course, if I had drafted it, I would have worded it differently, but each one of us could say that. However, we are here together at this table to try to reach some agreement.

However, I do not really agree with Mr. Harris when he says that we need to get more explanations and information before making such an important decision. I may be naive, Mr. Chairman, but I thought that everyone at this table was a specialist in energy matters and natural resources. It seems to me that people must have been chosen, among all the members of Parliament, because they knew what they were talking about on this issue. I am sure that Mr. Harris knows a great deal more than he is suggesting.

In addition, when we get a motion of this type several days ahead, we have an opportunity to ask questions of our assistants and researchers in our own parties in order to get a clear idea on the issues before we come to the meeting.

I do not think we should postpone things on the pretext that we do not have enough information on the subject.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bevington.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We too agree that this motion is important, and it could very well go ahead at this meeting. I think clearly the issue that you brought up, that there wasn't notification back to the person who made the motion about the inappropriate language, would mitigate somewhat your decision to call it out of order. I would say we should move ahead with this, allow Mr. Cullen to redraft the motion, and get a vote on it here.

•(1615)

The Chair: Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Thank you again, Mr. Chair.

I guess you learn something every day. I rather thought that the motion itself was simply what the government was being asked to do. I read—and frankly still do, perhaps naively—the motion as being the last sentence, what the committee is actually asking to do, and the wording that proceeds that as preamble, contextual framework, call it what you may.

But I don't find the last sentence argumentative or inappropriate. I thought that was the motion.

The Chair: I should say that in the course of the discussion, the clerk has been whispering in my ear that it's not up to me to make that call any further. I'm just going on a recommendation from Beauchesne.

In response to that, Mr. St. Amand, I'll ask the indulgence of the committee again to hear from the clerk why it is the way it is.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, Mr. Chair, you're exactly right, Mr. St. Amand. The last sentence is the motion. The problem with the motion is that it's in the same paragraph as the preamble. That's what makes it out of order. By having it in one body, it makes it as if it's a stand-alone motion. The only thing you would have to do is separate the motion from the preamble, and that would be fine. That's the only issue.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Then why don't we do that?

I'd like to come back to Mr. Harris's point and the parliamentary secretary's point. We refer to reviewing the funding for this program; the government has been doing that for many months, so I wouldn't bring a motion to committee to ask the committee to ask the government to do something it is already doing.

This motion calls for the government to reinstate full funding for the program. I'm not prepared to go with that wording, but I would be prepared to split out the motion from the preamble. If the committee finds some of the wording too colourful on the wind power production incentive program, take out from the preamble, "the Minister of Natural Resources had frozen the popular, effective wind power program. As a result of this decision the industry has been thrown into...", and then split off the motion from the preamble. I'm quite happy to do that.

It's the same with the EnerGuide program. I didn't give my remarks on the EnerGuide program, but to talk about the need for officials—we've had officials here speaking specifically on this particular program on a couple of occasions. I spoke to Mr. Paradis about perhaps bringing the Treasury Board and Finance Canada officials here. He tells me that they're not able to do that, or won't do that; I'm not sure. Frankly, we have enough information to deal with this motion, but I'd be prepared to make that compromise—to take out a couple of colourful wordings and to split off the motion from the preamble.

On the EnerGuide program, would it be in order to take out the words, "for political reasons" and just say "the minister has terminated this effective and efficient program", and then separate out the motion?

The Chair: Let me just clarify where we are with regard to Beauchesne's and the rules of order here.

It might first be useful to the committee to understand the intent of the motion. Is it the intent of the mover of the motion to have this presented to the House, or is it to be a resolution of the committee?

Hon. Roy Cullen: It would be as a resolution of the committee. What happens beyond the committee is not my call.

I have a motion in front of the committee. That's what we're dealing with.

•(1620)

The Chair: Fine. It's clear, then, that it would be a resolution of the committee.

Before we go any further, though, in this vein, a point that was made in the early part of the meeting has to be made again. It is that the motions, as they have been presented, have been ruled out of order. The alternative is to resubmit the motion, with notice, at the next meeting of the committee. An alternative to that is to seek unanimous consent of the committee to waive notice. Then you could make amendments now, and we could deal with it at this meeting.

I just want everyone to be clear on where we stand.

Madame DeBellefeuille is next.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm not really up to speed yet on committee procedure. If I understood what the clerk said correctly, if Mr. Cullen had left two spaces after his preamble, we could have accepted his motion, because then the preamble would have been separate.

So we are using reasons having to do with the layout of the text and typographical considerations in order to disallow a motion or rule it out of order. I think that if the people at this table wanted to act in good faith, we could agree to say that the important thing is to call for the reinstatement of the EnerGuide Program or the WPPI Program.

I would like the clerk to provide me with some information about procedure should I decide to table a motion. If a member of Parliament gives you a motion almost 7 days ahead of time, is it not up to you to find out immediately whether or not the motion is in order, so that the member can amend it or find out more about the situation?

The Clerk: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman.

The problem is that Mr. Cullen had submitted his notice at a meeting and the motion was distributed to committee members. Since the motion had already been submitted to the committee, there was nothing to be done until it was dealt with by the committee.

If Mr. Cullen — and this applies to any other member as well — had come to see me before submitting his notice, I could have mentioned the aspects of the motion that might give rise to problems. Since the motion had been distributed to the committee, my position was somewhat unclear. There could have been political implications. I did not know what the intentions were. Since committee members already had the motion, it was not really up to me to tell the mover of the motion that it should be changed, and then redistributed. Do you see what I mean?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Yes, I see, but if Mr. Cullen had agreed immediately to separate the preamble from the motion, could we debate it today or Thursday? Could we assume that he has tabled it today, so that we can discuss it on Thursday?

The Clerk: As the Chairman mentioned, we would need unanimous consent in order to change the motion today. Otherwise, it would be a new motion, and it would be necessary to comply with the requirement for 24 hours notice.

I must say that by separating the motion in the committee's minutes of proceedings, only the motion would appear. The preamble would appear only if the committee decided to report to the House. In that case, the preamble would be the report, and the motion would be the adoption of the report.

● (1625)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Trost, before you begin, there have been some discussions while that discussion was going on.

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Having listened to the back-and-forth in the argument, I think Mr. Cullen's presentation was actually fairly reasonable when he said to just let him reword it, take out what he termed "colourful" and get it into the form of a proper motion. He's not going to win the votes from this side of the House at this point, but then it will be in a proper form and it will be dealt with. It won't end up bogging down the

committee in the future or cause relations problems, etc. Mr. Cullen will get what was more of a technical oversight had he split the sentences, and we won't do it.

I can't speak for all of the government members, but I know some of us would be willing to do that. I think it would also satisfy the opposition's requirements. Unless there's a member willing to object, we could then move to unanimous consent to let Mr. Cullen revise it in a way that's acceptable, which sounds like it shouldn't be a problem, from what I've heard him say. We can then go through the vote and the resolution, and if it has the majority of the committee, it can pass today.

The Chair: I have to interrupt, because we have a motion to seek the unanimous consent of the committee to allow an amendment to the motion, thereby waiving notice of a subsequent motion to the next meeting. What that will essentially do is just allow us to continue and vote on the motion today, as amended by Mr. Cullen to the satisfaction, I take it, of Mr. Trost.

Is that your agreement?

Mr. Cullen, do you want to speak to that before we—

Hon. Roy Cullen: No. I thought you were calling for a vote on that.

The Chair: I'm going to ask right now for unanimous consent to waive notice of motion. To be clear, the first motions by Mr. Cullen today have been declared out of order. We are now asking for the unanimous consent of the committee to waive notice for Mr. Cullen to reintroduce a similar motion.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We have unanimous consent.

Mr. Cullen, would you like to present your motions again? You have the will of the chair.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, colleagues.

I just want to make something clear. I was asked earlier whether this is a motion to be presented to the committee. That is what this is, but then there would be the opportunity to report it to the House, right? That would happen in due course, would it not?

The Chair: No, not unless it was reflected in the motion directly.

Hon. Roy Cullen: So that has to be incorporated into the wording, "and report it to the House".

Can I just read, then, how I propose the revised motions? The motion to reinstate the wind power production incentive program would read:

That the committee recognizes that the Conservative government and the Minister of Natural Resources have frozen the popular and effective wind power production incentive program. As a result of this decision, the industry has been thrown into disarray, putting jobs and future investment at risk.

We'd then separate out a new paragraph:

The committee calls upon the government and the Minister of Natural Resources to immediately reinstate full funding for this program, and report this to the House.

On the EnerGuide program—

Hon. Robert Thibault: I think you should do one motion at a time.

The Chair: Do you want to do that?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Yes, I guess we can do them one at a time.

The Chair: Does anyone want to speak to that?

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: Could I just hear his words again? Following the words “incentive program” and the period, what was the wording you had after that, Mr. Cullen? It does start now with “As a result of...”?

Hon. Roy Cullen: It says, “As a result of this decision, the industry has been thrown into disarray, putting jobs and future investment at risk.”

Mr. Richard Harris: Thank you.

Hon. Roy Cullen: And the other paragraph states, “The committee calls upon the government and the Minister of Natural Resources to immediately reinstate full funding for this program, and report this to the House.”

Mr. Richard Harris: I'd like to suggest maybe a friendly amendment for Mr. Cullen, just a change. I think the words “popular and effective” are an assumption that could be debatable. If you just have “frozen the wind power production incentive program”, we can leave the determination of “popular and effective” to the debate.

• (1630)

Hon. Roy Cullen: I can accept that. It would therefore read:

...and the Minister of Natural Resources have frozen the wind power production incentive program. As a result of this decision, the industry has been thrown into disarray, putting jobs and future investment at risk.

And then the new paragraph reads:

The committee calls upon the government and the Minister of Natural Resources to immediately reinstate full funding for this program, and report this to the House.

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Trost.

Mr. Bradley Trost: I'm just curious as to why the honourable member felt it necessary to throw in the “report this to the House” business after saying previously in the exchange that he wasn't really quite sure what was going happen with this, etc. It seems to be quite a significant change from what he'd previously said here in committee and from what he wanted to amend it to.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I just plead ignorance on that. I should know better after eleven years in this place, but I made the assumption that if a motion were passed by the committee, it would automatically be referred to the House. I apologize for that.

The Chair: Mr. Tonks.

Mr. Alan Tonks: With great respect to my colleague, if I was going to do this, I would word the motion thusly: “That the appropriate officials and Ministers of Natural Resources and the Environment be directed to reassess the EnerGuide program and the wind power production program, with a view to reinstating the programs, and that this motion be forwarded on to the House for its information.”

It's a dynamic process. It's one we would monitor, with officials coming before us here. We would validate or we would debate the

validation of the assumptions, and that would be the end of it, Mr. Chairman.

I respect my colleague very much. He has been around here longer than I have. But where I come from, we would have had the officials here. I think that's where we're very much at a loss here, because we would have had the opportunity to have staff clarify a lot of those assumptions.

If we want to do something about this, I can see that there's going to be an impasse and I can see that my side, our side, whatever side, isn't going to be satisfied with the approach that I take. Well, quite frankly, that's the democratic process.

So if it is in order, I would move that motion in place of Mr. Cullen's motion, and members can have the opportunity to vote against that or not. But that's what I would do.

Is that in order?

The Chair: No, it's not. It would be in order if you were to twist his arm, but not in that form.

We're dealing with Mr. Cullen's motion at this time. We have accepted, I think, one friendly amendment to this point. It is up to Mr. Cullen to determine whether or not he wants to—

Hon. Roy Cullen: Maybe I was misreading the committee, but I don't see a major impasse. I thought we were getting close, and unless there is some problem—

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Could it be read again?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Why don't we just proceed with what we were discussing?

The Chair: For clarity, it was prior to voting for giving unanimous consent to pursue it today. I think the government members were of the view that this would be a resolution of the committee, as opposed to reporting it to the House. That is the difference that I think Mr. Tonks has picked up on.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Well then, can I make another suggestion? What I can do is rework the wording along the lines we've discussed today, and we can deal with it on Thursday. Will there be time on Thursday?

• (1635)

The Chair: We'll make time, if that's your preference.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Yes. If we have the agreement of the committee that the wording will be along the lines I've discussed today, we'll deal with it on Thursday. Okay?

The Chair: Fine. I think we have unanimous consent of the committee, so we can probably pursue it in that direction.

Mr. Ouellet, did you want to comment?

Mr. Christian Ouellet: No, it's okay.

The Chair: Mr. Harris, do you have something further?

Mr. Richard Harris: Yes. I suggest that perhaps Mr. Cullen and Mr. Tonks might want to get together. The two of them could come up with something that might just fly the first time around.

The Chair: All right. To proceed then, on behalf of the committee, may I ask if your suggestion would apply to both motions that were previously raised?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Yes.

I don't know if I went over the wording of that one in as much detail. I think we're probably going to get into problems on the EnerGuide one when we say "the minister ignored the advice of departmental officials". So what I would suggest, Mr. Chair, is that we say:

This government and the Minister of Natural Resources have terminated the EnerGuide for Houses and EnerGuide for Low Income Houses programs. The committee, in the interest of sound public policy, and for the benefit of all Canadians, calls upon the Minister of Natural Resources to immediately reinstate these programs and report this to the House.

The Chair: We are entering into debate that I think we are now agreed we will have on Thursday. As I said at the outset, if I could merely suggest one thing, it is that members of the committee seek the advice of the clerk before giving notices of motion so the clerk can advise on the procedural acceptability. That's the only thing we have a hang-up with here. It was the procedural acceptability.

Maybe I could suggest to Mr. Cullen that you run it past the clerk and get it to him so he can then distribute it to the committee before the meeting on Thursday. That's all I'm concerned with.

Mr. Thibault.

Hon. Robert Thibault: For clarity for everybody, I assume from all the discussion that the unanimous consent is gone, those motions are going to be withdrawn, and that Mr. Cullen would be giving advance notice within 24 hours of the motion.

The Chair: Yes, technically I think that's where we are. We are essentially giving notice again. We'll be a little short of the 48 hours, so I think we'll stay with the unanimous consent of the committee to rewrite the motions presented. That way we don't have to give 48 hours' notice.

Oh, it's 24 hours? Okay, fine. You will just resubmit them, after seeking advice of the clerk, I would hope, and then we won't have any problem on Thursday.

Essentially, the day is concluded. The motions have been called out of order. We'll have new motions presented to the committee on Thursday, with 24 hours' notice, and after discussion with the clerk.

Can I take you back to the first motion of the day, which was Mr. Cullen's suggestion that we add helicopters to our trip to Fort McMurray. The clerk has sought quotes, and remarkably, we have several. I think it's worth a minute or two of the committee's time. Maybe some of the more experienced members can let us know if they think we're going to get away with this.

What is it going to cost to fly the party around Fort McMurray for an hour or so?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My logistics person quoted three different companies, the most expensive of which would charge about \$2,000 per flight hour per helicopter. I can give you the—

The Chair: We need to listen for a minute because there are different combinations. Some of the helicopters take four people; some of them take more than that. There are different prices. Maybe you could go through it, and everybody should take notes to get an idea of it. We really want to look at the cost. I don't think you need

more than an hour in a helicopter per person. It's probably the minimum they will rent them for. I think that's sufficient, and we can do that before we begin the bus tour, if we're able to do this.

Would you get to a point where you can say what it's going to cost to transport 14 people by helicopter for one hour, whether or not we're in two helicopters or five helicopters.

Mr. Thibault.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Having had the benefit of the helicopter visit to Fort McMurray once, I was told at that time that before you fly over the property—I was there at the invitation of Suncor; I was using their property. But if you have to go to Syncrude.... I don't know if it was the law or if it was out of courtesy, but you have to have the permission of those companies. I don't know how valuable it would be to do the tour without somebody in there—the pilots probably know, they fly there all the time—telling you what you're looking at.

• (1640)

The Chair: If people didn't get that point, it was simply, what would be the value of flying around for an hour without having someone to answer your questions while you're in the helicopter, or to give you an idea of what you're looking at if it's not immediately discernible to a novice in the area? We might then have to have at least one person in each bird to give a running commentary. It's a good point. We'll keep that in mind. I guess I'm going to get into the situation of who to have. Are we going to have representatives of the companies, or who? Our host so far is Syncrude. Whether we could ask Suncor to do it, or somebody else, is one point.

The other question we have is translation. Will we have to bring additional translators along for each helicopter? I'd have to ask the indulgence of the committee. If it wasn't necessary to have them in all helicopters, perhaps we could waive that and have them in just one. I presume it would be an English guide.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Syncrude would have francophone people capable of doing it. Half my community is up there.

The Chair: Let's just talk about the numbers for a second. I'm sure we can work out the logistics. What were the numbers?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I've been given the breakdown per seat per helicopter. I've been doing math while you've been discussing. It would be \$7,000 per chopper per hour, plus fuel for the first company, and we would need.... No, sorry. It would be \$7,000 per hour, plus fuel. Okay, for the first company—

The Chair: That's not helpful unless people know how many people you can put in a helicopter.

The Clerk: No, but that's adding all four helicopters together. For the first company, it's four four-seat helicopters at \$1,750 each. I've added up the price and that—

Hon. Roy Cullen: Can't we get one of those big Bell Helicopters that seats 12 or 15?

The Clerk: These are the companies that are there. From the second company we can get two five-seat helicopters at \$1,575, but then you've got to pay oil, fuel, and GST per chopper per hour. Then we would need one other three-seater at \$995 plus oil and fuel. From the third company we'd get a six-seater, a five-seater, and another five-seater. That would come up to about \$9,900, and that's an hour and a half tour. My logistics person mentioned that if we want to go with this last group she feels it's the cheapest and they offer a tour over all five oil sands projects.

The Chair: Okay. Our original budget request for this trip was how much?

It's \$24,000, and this would take it to about \$35,000 all in. Frankly, I don't think that's unreasonable, and I think it really does add to our understanding of the situation. I'm open for debate. What do you think, guys? Should we push for it and try to get that by the...?

Mr. Harris. You're not going anyway, so you'd be an unbiased observer.

Mr. Richard Harris: So I could give an unbiased opinion?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Richard Harris: I think it's kind of expensive. When it appears in *The Hill Times* or in the *National Post*, someone is going to have to explain how we spent \$8,000 an hour for a helicopter. I don't want to have to do that.

• (1645)

The Chair: I'm not sure it's you they'd be after.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Richard Harris: I'll say that's why I didn't go.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I have the same trepidation or relative discomfort with the cost as well. I'm happy to go, and I think a bus tour would be on balance just about as beneficial.

The Chair: Monsieur Thibault.

Hon. Robert Thibault: I understand, Richard.

We get these pressures, I know. But overall, in the whole thing, you have 308 parliamentarians who are making decisions on over \$200 billion of expenditures a year, and a lot of those things are very important for the long run. If we're flying a cabinet minister to Toronto today, it's going to cost \$40,000 to send them there and back.

I won't be there either, so I don't have the conflict, but you're looking at a dozen members of Parliament who will I think have their understanding of those vicinities, and the scope of it, and the size of it.... If you're interested in the environmental issues, both positively and negatively, I think it's important that you go up. If you look at the cost on the whole scheme of the thing, the cost to bring you up there plus for these highly paid administration people who are here, that's the big cost. On top of that, the additional money I think is probably value for money.

I was amazed when I saw it by helicopter. They chose where they brought me; I was Minister of Fisheries at the time and it was on environmental things. But to fly over what looks like an

environmental wasteland, a disaster, where everything is black, and the Athabasca River is running through that and you can see absolutely right through it to see what.... They've done a really fantastic job environmentally on those things. I wouldn't have imagined without seeing it from a helicopter that was possible, that it was humanly possible.

So I would encourage you to let the chairman take the hit on the financing part of it.

The Chair: Madame Bell.

Ms. Catherine Bell: Thank you.

I have two things. The first one is that I think you mentioned that the airplane costs are going to come off here, so that's almost the same amount as what we would be spending on a helicopter if we were to do that. Also, I've been in helicopters before and they are very noisy, and I don't know how you can have a conversation with anyone and ask questions back and forth.

The Chair: Everybody has headphones. They do this commercially, and everybody has headphones on. It's not a problem.

Ms. Catherine Bell: Okay.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Think of how many times officials have swooped over there in helicopters, and every time an MP or a parliamentarian tries to do it, we all feel guilty.

The Chair: Yes.

I have to say something on this. We padded the budget originally to take care of unforeseen circumstances. It won't be quite this high, but I have to agree with Mr. Thibault, having been there several times, that you just don't get the same impact from the ground, and you're not able to get around. This is over 50 square miles, so you're simply not able to do that on a bus.

I also think that if it was just to view the operations of Syncrude or of Suncor, or of any one plant, a bus ride would suffice. But I think it seems to be the growing consensus of the committee that you want to look at a whole lot more than that. You want to look at the economic, environmental, and social ramifications of this, and that would be, in my view, clearly better understood from a bird's eye view, so to speak.

Do we have any further comment? Mr. Trost.

Mr. Bradley Trost: I'll just say that we may as well end the discussion on this and vote on it; if the majority is in favour of it, then we'll all go for it. I think the majority is in favour of it, from the straw poll. There's no point in discussing it ad infinitum.

The Chair: Fair enough, and I might just say that I am going to ask the clerk to tighten up the budget request a little bit so that it's maybe down around \$30,000.

The clerk has a suggestion.

• (1650)

The Clerk: Essentially we need a motion to adopt the budget, and this is the way it's worded:

That the proposed budget in the amount of \$24,412, for the Committee's travel to Calgary and Fort McMurray on November 19 and 20, 2006, be adopted and that the Chair present the said budget to the Budget Subcommittee of the Liaison Committee

—and I've added the following part per the conversation in the committee—

and that the Clerk be authorized to modify the total amount to provide for the participation of Dennis Bevington and for the helicopter tour of the Oil Sands.

The last part is as it is because we don't have the specific numbers for the helicopter tour—but we need the motion to be adopted today.

An hon. member: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Very good. We'll go from there, and I hope to have an answer for you on that by Thursday.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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