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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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● (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

We have a quorum. This is meeting number 11, and the item for our business this morning is to discuss the future business of the committee. Without further ado, we'll go into it.

There's not an agenda, but I have suggested items. We could follow up the report on the commission of inquiry into the events relating to Maher Arar. I will ask you how you wish to proceed with that. We also need to look at how this committee wants to proceed with Bill C-12.

Mr. Holland has suggested a study concerning the arming of border guards. Mr. Cotler has a motion, but he's not here this morning. We also have a request from a Tanzanian delegation of parliamentarians who would like to meet with us on Thursday. We can discuss how to proceed with that. Mr. Rosen also has proposed a conference, and Mr. Ménard has proposed a trip to Quebec.

Those are some of the possible items we can deal with, and unless any of you have further suggestions, we can begin at the top.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Chair, what about estimates?

The Chair: The estimates have to be done by November—I can't remember the date—yes, November 10. I can add that to the list: to deal with the estimates.

Yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Can I address the list in terms of scheduling?

I think we need to give priority to the estimates, given the time schedule we have and the week we're going to be off. I think this is the first item we should schedule. It may not be the first item we do, but we should schedule it and give ourselves at least a couple of sessions to address them and to bring forth witnesses.

In that regard, as I'm sure is close to your heart, Mr. Chair, I was concerned about the budget cuts that occurred—of \$6 million—in the gun registry. I would want a witness—from the RCMP now—as well as the minister, to explain what those are. That's one witness I would like to have. I assume we're going to have the minister in any event, but I would like specifically somebody from the RCMP who can explain in detail where that \$6 million saving is coming from.

I can jump, want to draw the committee's attention to a newspaper article. This is on the O'Connor report and the testimony we had

from Commissioner Zaccardelli on Thursday. The former minister of public safety, Wayne Easter, is quoted extensively in the *Toronto Star* on the weekend, refuting some of the testimony we had from Commissioner Zaccardelli with respect to what information was given to the minister and the cabinet in that period of time, in fact saying that what Commissioner Zaccardelli said with regard to that is not true, that “we were not informed”.

As I think the committee already knows, I am strongly in favour of this committee taking on some additional responsibilities with respect to reviewing the O'Connor report. As part of any hearings we have in that regard, I would want Mr. Easter brought forward as a witness and Commissioner Zaccardelli brought back to respond, both of them at the same session, so that we can get to the bottom of this.

Regarding the O'Connor report more generally, I think we're confronted, Mr. Chair, with the reality that most of what we need to do with respect to responding to it is really with what's coming in the second report, which is due somewhere around the end of November or the first week of December. I think in planning our scheduling we have to take that into account, and I would want to commence hearings on the recommendations that are coming out of the second report, as well as any we may need to address out of the first, some time in early December.

Those are the comments I would make on the schedule on those two points. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): I saw much the same as Mr. Comartin about the former solicitor general. I had already put down here that I thought we should call him and former minister of public safety Anne McLellan. She may very well have something to add to that story. I think we should have someone here from CSIS and someone here from the Department of Foreign Affairs. There obviously were some differences between those agencies, and it would be interesting for the committee to find out some background on who knew what, and when they knew it. I think it's only appropriate that the committee get that information.

After we have those folks, we may very well want to expand. I don't think we should limit it to those few names that we've brought forward right now. There may be some additional information, as a result of that investigative hearing before the committee, such that we want to go somewhere else.

The Chair: Are there any further comments respecting what you think we should proceed with in that regard?

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Just with respect to our continuing review of the Arar affair, it's probably not a bad idea also to have the deputy minister come in to talk about how the department is responding in this instance and what their reaction would be. So my suggestion would be that we have the deputy minister in.

The Chair: Just as a question in that regard, why would you have the deputy minister rather than the minister here?

● (0910)

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm happy to have the minister again. We only had the minister for an hour, so I think it would be a good idea. Again, it depends on timing. There are two elements. One is to have the deputy minister to talk about the departmental response and perhaps be able to answer some of those issues.

Maybe we can have them both at the same time. I know we asked for an extension, but we only ended up with 40 minutes to question the minister. I don't think the minister got the opportunity, and I don't think the committee members got the occasion, to really ask the questions they felt they needed to ask on this in terms of going forward with some of the specifics. I heard from a lot of committee members, certainly on our side, who felt they didn't have a great enough opportunity.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Just on the issue of the deputy minister, the ones we would actually want to hear from are the deputy ministers in that period of time, not necessarily the current deputy minister. I believe the current incumbents in the positions that would be relevant are all new. I think there were some changes during that three-year period. They are the ones we want to hear from on this point, as to what information was passed through, because in a number of cases it may have gone to the deputy minister and been held up there rather than getting up to the minister. We need to follow that chain.

The Chair: Mr. Alhabra.

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't think it's a bad thing to also look back into the past. Judge O'Connor has done an extensive report, but if the committee wishes to do this, that's fine. The other issue we should not neglect is how the government or the department is going to react to those recommendations and what we are going to do to move forward. If the committee wishes to bring previous ministers, that may be fine, but we should not neglect the role of the committee in working with the government on how to move forward.

The Chair: Logically, I think Mr. Comartin addressed that somewhat. We should wait for the second part of Mr. O'Connor's recommendations and then we could possibly deal with it.

It seems to me we have three main items here that we'll have to prioritize: continued investigation of the Arar affair, Bill C-12, and the estimates. It seems we have those three priorities.

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: We haven't had a chance to discuss, Mr. Chairman, the issue of studying the arming of the border guards. I know there is some time, because this is a ten-year plan, but nonetheless I think we should take advantage of it and at least discuss it. I put it on the table. In your listings of priorities, I wanted to make sure it wasn't missed here.

The Chair: Yes, I did list that, but it seems to me that within the next month we want to make sure that we cover these three items, and if we have time, by all means, no problem.

Mr. Mark Holland: No, I guess what I'm saying is that I appreciate that there are a lot, and a lot that are very important that are on our plate immediately. My suggestion is not to interfere with that or usurp it in any way but simply to request that the matter be put on the list to be dealt with after we deal with some of these more immediate, more pressing needs.

The Chair: All right. Where do we go from here? What do you suggest?

Mr. Joe Comartin: I have a question, Mr. Chair. I don't know where Bill C-12 is at, at this point.

The Chair: It has been referred to the committee. So as a piece of legislation, I think that's....

Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Chair, I think we should deal with the estimates first and get that out of the way, and then we can get into what I consider the meatier things.

The Chair: Sure. There's a suggestion.

Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I would agree with that, wanting it to be the first meeting next week, and have the Tanzanian delegation on Thursday.

In regard to that, Mr. Chair, are you anticipating that the delegation would take a full two hours, or just an hour?

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk here in a minute, but my understanding is that they just want to observe how this committee works, and then after we've done our work, they might want to just talk with us for half an hour. They don't have a set agenda that they want to discuss with us.

Maybe I'll ask the clerk to comment on that.

● (0915)

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Louise Hayes): That's accurate. There are seven members. They're parliamentarians from Tanzania. They will be here on Thursday. The reason they were interested in our committee is because there are a couple of members of that delegation who are parliamentarians on their equivalent committee in their country, and they said they would like to observe the committee doing its work and then possibly meet with you afterwards. So it's up to the committee if it wishes to meet with them or for how long it would like to do that.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair, then we would need to have an order of business that day in order for them to observe us.

The Chair: Exactly. So we'd have to come up with something, but I don't think we want to do it just to have something to do to entertain them. I think we should have some legitimate business we're dealing with.

So what do we feel is—

Mr. Joe Comartin: Could we start with Bill C-12 that quickly?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Chair, I think we could start with Bill C-12. I don't know that it's going to take up a terribly long period of time. It is the bill that was here last time. I think, by and large, we fixed whatever the issues were. So I think it would be appropriate that we deal with that, and if you have your guests here, they could see the committee—

The Chair: Yes, they can observe how we deal with it.

If we agree that we can start with Bill C-12, how do you want to start?

Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I would certainly agree that we do that. I think it actually might be helpful or educational for them if we have the officials here to do the overview, and I would think they would be available even on that short of notice.

They could see that, we could ask some questions, and they would get a sense of how the committee functions. So I would support that.

The Chair: Mr. MacKenzie, do you know whether the officials or the minister could be available?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I don't know, but I can find out. If we didn't do that, would you want to do the estimates?

Mr. Joe Comartin: I just don't know if it's going to be possible to get the minister here on that short of notice.

I would suggest, Mr. Chair, if we can't do that, that we go to Mr. Holland's point on the border guards.

The Chair: The minister has already been here on the estimates, so maybe we could have just the officials. I would suspect they can come on two days' notice; I'm sure they would. Maybe we'll continue with the meeting here while Mr. MacKenzie checks whether it's possible.

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Chair, I know we've set a number of items forward, and we were talking about the one meeting. But perhaps to finish the process what we need to do is try in some sense to define the scope of our undertaking with respect to Maher Arar.

What I'm hearing you say—and I don't have a problem with it—is that you would like to move in two parts. One would be looking at the leaks, with a view to the past and answering some of the questions of how they occurred. I don't have a problem with that. The second part would be dealing with going forward, as the second part of Justice O'Connor's report comes out. I don't have a problem with that.

Dealing specifically with the scope of how leaks occurred and how we're going to find this out, I make two suggestions. One, I think most of the suggested deputants make sense, and we would

concur. I would also add the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Review Committee.

The Chair: I think that Mr. MacKenzie suggested that.

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm sorry.

Mr. Omar Alhabra: No, SIRC is different from CSIS.

Mr. Mark Holland: Yes, I'm sorry. I was talking, so I didn't know if you had already mentioned it. Okay, the head of SIRC.

The other recommendation would be the deputy minister for public safety and national security. The reason there and the reason why I was bringing the deputy minister up before is that I know the RCMP is conducting its own review into how these leaks occurred, but obviously the ministry that's responsible has the responsibility to get to the bottom of how these leaks occurred. So what actions are being taken by the department to investigate these leaks and try to get to the bottom as well?

Are you suggesting the RCMP public complaints commissioner as well?

● (0920)

Mr. Omar Alhabra: I think so. The RCMP public complaints commissioner.

The Chair: Mr. Rosen informs me that on November 1.... Is it SIRC that comes out with a report?

Mr. Philip Rosen (Committee Researcher): Yes, Mr. Chair.

We've already agreed to hear from SIRC on their annual report on November 1. I'm pretty sure they would be able to answer questions about what they did in relation to the Arar situation.

The Chair: If I remember, that date is not flexible. Is that right?

Mr. Philip Rosen: That's right. I've given this explanation a number of times; I'm trying to remember where I've given it.

These are part-timers working for the Security Intelligence Review Committee. They are privy councillors, and they meet as a group three or four times a year in Ottawa. When they're here, their time is tightly scheduled.

After lengthy discussions between your clerk, Louise, and the people at SIRC, we agreed on November 1, which is a Wednesday. Conceivably, you could ask them questions about the Arar commission inquiry and what they've done.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Fundamentally, I don't dispute talking with these folks. My only concern is, are we redoing the O'Connor commission? Are we going to find out anything more than Justice O'Connor has already reported on?

I'm not sure what value that would have, if all we're doing is rehashing what O'Connor has already done.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: I certainly am sensitive to that. I don't think we would want to duplicate the work that's there.

There are some unanswered questions; Justice O'Connor pointed at those. I think the committee has to be very focused in its deliberations to ensure that we're not duplicating, that we're zeroing in on unanswered questions, and that we're doing our best to get to the bottom of it. One of those is how these leaks occurred, why they occurred, and where they're involved.

Mr. Chair, you had suggested—and I think it's a prudent course of action—to focus specifically on that item in the past tense. There's been a suggested list of deputations in this regard, and I concur with that.

Then going forward, we would review Justice O'Connor's second report, and start looking at how we could follow up and make sure those recommendations would be carried forward, if we agree with them—I'm presuming we will—but if we agree with those future recommendations.

The Chair: Okay.

Let me suggest that we agree on some kind of witness list here in regard to the commission of inquiry into the Maher Arar case. Is it okay if we proceed in that way now and draw up a list of witnesses we would like to hear before the committee? Then we can let the clerk deal with it and schedule them in as they're able to come.

Do we have agreement on proceeding that way? Okay.

Who is on the list of witnesses? I've heard the—

Mr. Mark Holland: Can I make a suggestion?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Mark Holland: Just as a potential suggestion—we've had a lot of discussion here, and the clerk may want to offer some additional thoughts or ideas—I don't know when our next steering committee meeting is, Mr. Chair, but if we have general consensus with some of the names that have been brought up, we could give a little bit of time for people, in case they think of other names that are relevant or pertinent, and send this to the steering committee.

Are we meeting tomorrow?

The Chair: This meeting was to be instead of the steering committee meeting.

Mr. Mark Holland: Oh, is it in place of it? Okay, I apologize.

The Chair: We do not have to meet as a steering committee if the entire committee is able to decide, because the steering committee decides and then brings it to this committee anyway. We're just short-circuiting the process.

Mr. Mark Holland: Okay. I wasn't aware that we weren't going to have a steering committee meeting.

The Chair: Yes, this is in lieu of a steering committee meeting.

Let's try to agree on a witness list.

I think I've heard from both sides here that Mr. Easter is someone we would call. Is there agreement on that?

Now, also we would have someone from CSIS. Who from CSIS would you like to come? The current director was not the director at the time, so who do we wish to invite here? Who was the former director?

Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: For the crucial period of time, I think it was Mr. Elcock, so I think it would be Ward Elcock, Mr. Chair. He was the director for almost all that period of time—Mr. Judd came in about eighteen months ago, I think it would have been—so for most of the crucial period of time around what information was gathered and flowing, he would have been the director.

●(0925)

The Chair: So you're suggesting Mr. Elcock would be the one to ask.

Mr. Rosen has told me that Mr. Hooper was the deputy director of operations at that time. Maybe we would like to ask him to come as well.

So it's Mr. Elcock and Mr. Hooper from CSIS.

Mr. Mark Holland: Just on the matter of CSIS, we haven't had a comment really of any substance from the director of CSIS yet at this point as to how they're going to deal with it. I understand we have to have a forward-looking element to it. If we're calling witnesses for it, I don't have any problem with the ones who have been suggested, but is it prudent to try to get CSIS in to get a statement from them on what has occurred to this point? There hasn't been anything largely that's been made public.

Members of the committee may feel it's sufficient to have the current director of operations. I'm just suggesting that we haven't really heard from CSIS on this matter, and we did have the commissioner of the RCMP in, so it would make sense to me that we also have the director of CSIS in.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, I don't disagree, but would it not be more appropriate to have the current director after we get the second report from O'Connor? That will give us more to work on in terms of what's coming down the road.

Mr. Mark Holland: I would agree except for the fact that we haven't heard from CSIS really to this point at all—and that's been an issue—either with respect to the issues in the past or the issues going forward. We had Commissioner Zaccardelli come and speak to us and offer an apology. We haven't had anything similar from the director of CSIS. Given that there hasn't been anything we've really heard from CSIS, or if we accept in the near term this looking back, then I suggest it would be prudent to have the director of CSIS here earlier rather than later.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: “Looking back”, to me, is the folks who were there at the time. Looking forward, after we get all of O'Connor's recommendations—

Mr. Mark Holland: It's also finding out what happened and how they're going to help and assist in finding out what occurred.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Except that the current director of CSIS wasn't there.

Mr. Mark Holland: No. But they have to help today to find out what happened then; isn't that correct?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Which is why I think after the second report we'd have a bigger package of recommendations for them to go forward with.

Mr. Mark Holland: Yes. I'll leave it at that. I think it's important that he be called for this process, looking back. There's still the going forward and how they improve things going forward, but there are still potentially the answers in the past.

The Chair: How about if we ask the current director to come and bring with him the past director and the deputy director? Is that a reasonable compromise in this situation?

Mr. Mark Holland: Yes, that makes sense.

The Chair: Okay. So we have Mr. Easter, and then we have CSIS coming.

Who else would you like? One of the suggestions made here was Anne McLellan, invite her to come. I'm not sure....

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I think she was there for at least part of that time.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Was she? No.

The Chair: She wasn't there?

A voice: No. She was the Minister of Justice.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry, Laurie.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Now that you mention it, it's true; she became the minister after he had come back.

The Chair: Right.

Okay, who else would we like to invite, besides those two?

Mr. Mark Holland: Well, SIRC. The head of SIRC is coming November 1, so we can work that into our....

That's already happening, but with respect to time allotment, I don't know. He's probably going to be presenting on another topic and there might be questions on other topics, so I would just ask that we make sure that we have sufficient time to pose questions.

The Chair: We also had somebody suggest the deputy minister from the past government. Who would like to confirm that? Shall we go ahead and invite them as well?

Mr. Comartin.

• (0930)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Yes, because if we're going to follow this chain, we're going to need the deputy minister. But I believe we have to bring Commissioner Zaccardelli back, as well.

The Chair: When would you like to do that, after you hear from the rest of the witnesses?

Mr. Joe Comartin: I think one of the problems we had on Thursday in terms of the shortage of time, the other frustration I had, was that I would have wanted other people there, who were there when these incidents were taking place. So I would like Mr. Easter and Commissioner Zaccardelli here at the same time, at the same session, and we'll give them an opportunity to go back and forth in response to questions on some of the specifics that I hope we'll raise at that point.

The Chair: Does anybody have any comments in regard to that? No? So it's okay with this committee?

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: The same day? Okay, I don't have a problem with that. At the same time? I think that's not going to be particularly useful or helpful. I think what you're going to get into is a lot of cross-talk and not a lot of opportunity, necessarily, to hear clear testimony. I don't have a problem with having them on the same day, if you wish, but having them at the same time doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

The Chair: Is there any comment to that? Are you saying, the first hour, Mr. Easter, and the second hour, Mr. Zaccardelli?

Mr. Joe Comartin: We would have to go with Mr. Easter first. So, in effect, if he continues with this storyline, he can refute what the commissioner said. Then the commissioner can get back in and explain where he in fact did report to the government, if he maintains his position.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I don't have any problem with that, but the other one I would like to hear from is the Department of Foreign Affairs, because they were involved in this. They don't have their own investigative people, so they had to rely on information from somebody.

The Chair: All right, so is everybody okay with having somebody from the Department of Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I'm just thinking that you might want to have those people in before you have the commissioner back.

The Chair: Okay.

Are you managing to take notes on all of this?

The Clerk: Yes, I am.

The Chair: This is becoming more complex all the time.

Okay, I think I've gone through the entire list of all the suggestions here, so can we just leave this with the clerk, then, to work out a schedule, beginning next week, I presume?

Oh, not next week, which is break week, but the following week.

Mr. Alghabra.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Chair, I know we're trying to be as efficient as possible with witnesses. The reason I suggested the RCMP public complaints commission is because they just issued a report, their annual report, in July. Supposedly, this is the only mechanism that oversees the RCMP right now, and I am sure the commissioner would have a lot to say.

The Chair: Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): The subcommittee reviewing the Anti-terrorism Act is going to be coming forward with the interim report, and that is imminent. There is a time restriction on that going back to Parliament, so that's another issue we need to deal with, and we may need to deal with the interim report very quickly.

The Chair: In that regard, what timelines are you talking about?

Mr. Gord Brown: The self-imposed deadline for the interim report is the end of this week, and I know we're going to be dealing with it at ten o'clock. If that is coming out of the subcommittee, it can come back here very soon.

The Chair: And when does it have to be reported to Parliament? What deadline are we looking at here?

Mr. Gord Brown: If the sunset provisions are to remain in effect, Parliament has to pass it in 15 sitting days after the first of January. The subcommittee is going to be bringing forward the interim report that will deal with those sunset provisions now, in the next few days. This committee may be able to deal with it rather quickly after it's been dealt with by the subcommittee, but the subcommittee will continue with its work on the rest of the report after we bring forward the interim report.

The Chair: Do you envision that it would take more than one meeting of this committee to deal with it?

• (0935)

Mr. Gord Brown: I don't think so. But we are going to need—

The Chair: Let's not book our schedule too full here, but let's allow for some flexibility is what you're suggesting.

Mr. Gord Brown: We will have to deal with it, so I agree.

The Chair: Okay.

Yes, Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: Just on that item, and I know other items may come up, I would say that particular item would take one meeting. Not that I'm looking for more meetings, but it is possible to schedule a special meeting to deal with it, if we were to find that our schedule was full from dealing with matters pertaining to the Arar affair. There are options like that.

I don't think we should preclude having witnesses we feel are important because we might have something we have to deal with. If we have to deal with it, perhaps what we could do is schedule an extra meeting to ensure that we accomplish both. Certainly it is important that we cover this as well.

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Chair, I would suggest we go ahead and schedule a date in the next few weeks to deal with it, because the interim report will be back. It may be dealt with as early as today.

The Chair: Okay. We'll ask the clerk to schedule that in.

Are there are no more witnesses, then, in regard to the Arar affair?

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: There are just a couple for the consideration of the committee. One is the ambassador from the U.S. and the ambassador from Syria. Obviously those are....

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Chair, why would we have any expectation that they would come before this committee, when both governments refuse to participate at all, in either—

Mr. Mark Holland: The question is not necessarily whether they would come; I understand that. But I think that—

The Chair: My gut feeling is I don't think I really want to go there. But what does the rest of this committee feel?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I don't see any point in going there. I think we'd end up with a kind of cat's breakfast out of it all. I don't know

what we would want.... I mean, we're looking at what happened, as opposed to putting them in a position they probably don't want to be in, and I don't know what we would gain from it.

Mr. Mark Holland: I don't have a problem with that. I'm trying to make sure we at least discuss some of these options.

The other one is Shirley Heafey, the former chair of the RCMP complaints committee—this is the individual who received the complaints at the time—to ask what they did with them when those complaints came in.

Mr. Omar Alhabra: She's the former, actually; she's not the current commissioner. She was the one who received the first complaint from Mr. Arar.

Mr. Mark Holland: That's probably the most relevant one, I believe.

The Chair: We can always add to this. As things come up, we can always deal with them. This isn't set in stone in any way. So I think we'll let the clerk work on it.

Mr. Mark Holland: Just before we continue, are we agreeing, then, on Shirley Heafey?

The Chair: Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I would actually prefer to hold her until we get to the second report. She has a great deal to contribute, given her experience. But in terms of what we're trying to deal with right now, with Commissioner Zaccardelli's testimony last Thursday and “who knew what”, she would not have been in the circle for that information; she would have been outside of it.

The Chair: I tend to agree with you, Mr. Comartin. I think we need to be focused.

What do the rest of you feel? I think it would be best to focus on what we should focus on now.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: With all due respect, we probably have two separate things to deal with here, and as Mr. Comartin said, I think we should deal with what is out there in the first report—what we've heard. I guess we're in the “he said, she said” situation here. These other issues are probably best dealt with after that second report, because it is just going to be dealing with those issues.

The Chair: Yes. Are you okay with that, or how do you feel?

Mr. Mark Holland: Well, the only thing is with respect to Shirley.... I'm sorry; I believe the analysts had a last name. I'm mispronouncing the last name.

• (0940)

Mr. Philip Rosen: It was Heafey.

Mr. Mark Holland: She was the one who actually received the first complaints and would have been the one who.... What she did with them, who she talked to, how it was followed up are all very pertinent to past-tense considerations, and if we're looking at what happened and what went wrong, I think we're going to want to have the person who was complained to in front of us to understand what was done with those complaints.

The Chair: I don't think anybody is disputing that. Let's just do the other ones first.

Mr. Mark Holland: I don't have a problem with doing the other ones first. It's just that if we're dividing this process into two rounds, what I thought I was hearing was that we were moving it to the second round, which was looking at Justice O'Connor's second report, looking forward.

I don't have a problem with her being deeper into the first round, which is looking at the past. My only comment is that she should be in that process of looking at the past.

The Chair: Are there any other comments? Okay, we'll ask our clerk to try to sort this out and get people into a semblance of order.

For Thursday, have you heard anything concerning Bill C-12?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I'm told it shouldn't be a problem to have department people here; they just need a letter from the clerk.

The Chair: All right. Can that all be done within two days?

The Clerk: Of course.

The Chair: Of course. We are very efficient.

The third item of business was.... Yes?

Mr. Joe Comartin: So on Thursday we will have Bill C-12 and the Tanzanian delegation?

The Chair: Yes. I envision that we'll have the officials on Bill C-12 for maybe an hour and 45 minutes, and then we can just ask them if they have any questions at the end of the meeting. We can allow maybe 15 minutes or half an hour, depending on how much time they need.

Mr. Joe Comartin: That's what my question was going to be about. The clerk had indicated some kind of meeting afterwards. Are we having a lunch or a social or something like that?

The Chair: No, I don't think so. They don't expect that. They just want to observe this committee. As a matter of courtesy, we'd ask them if they have any comments or questions about what they saw here; it would all be part of the two-hour meeting.

Okay?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: So they'll be here for a briefing on Thursday?

The Chair: Yes; that will be October 5, on Bill C-12. We are going to invite them.

Other groups—the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities—have asked to come as witnesses on Bill C-12. In future meetings, would we like to hear from them as well? Some of these groups are very supportive, I think. Should we ask the clerk to contact these people and try to work them in? We may be dealing with several things at the same time here.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Chair, I think the Red Cross is definitely needed. No matter what happens in these types of situations, they're always there; I think we need to know how they will dovetail with this legislation.

The Chair: Sure, okay; we'll invite the Canadian Red Cross. You're all okay with that?

What about the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities?

Mr. Joe Comartin: I definitely think we should have the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Mr. Ménard was with me at an international conference in the spring. The theme that kept coming up was that in any emergency—whether it's a pandemic, a natural disaster, or a terrorist act—the initial responders are at the municipal level, so we need to hear if they're comfortable with this legislation.

The Chair: All right, so there are two witnesses.

Mr. Rick Norlock: There are three levels of government. I think it only appropriate that we not leave any out, so maybe we need to think about how the provincial aspect works into this.

It's true that municipalities do usually end up first, but if we look at some of the recent disasters, Katrina being one, the question is how we make sure that all three levels of government have an apparatus with which people feel comfortable, and that there's a smooth operation, as opposed to.... It's who has authority over what, and when, and all those things. We want to make sure that Bill C-12 adds to a sense of comfort, rather than adding another layer of bureaucracy that will only make things worse.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: My colleague is absolutely right, but I think in this case there have been federal-provincial discussions with respect to Bill C-12. If we were to get somebody from the provincial authorities, we'd end up having to do the ten provinces and the territories and we could go on a long time.

With this bill in its reincarnation there were some issues with Quebec, I believe, and they've been addressed. It's a very good point that my colleague has, but I think we would spend a great deal of time to find out that they have already been part of the discussion.

● (0945)

The Chair: Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I'd like to add that we dropped the cap on the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. With the vulnerability of the petroleum industry in Canada—pipelines and refineries and so on—I think it's probably worth while to put that on as well.

The Chair: Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Joe Comartin: If we're going to bring the petroleum people in, we better bring the nuclear people in too.

Just going back to the issue that Mr. Norlock raised, I think it's a good one. Could we have someone—perhaps the parliamentary secretary could arrange this—who would give us a summary of the interaction between the federal government and the provinces and territories so we are brought up to date? I know there are concerns from Quebec. This would give us an indication as to whether there are any residual concerns from the provincial level. I would like to hear that.

The Chair: Okay—for Thursday, yes.

I think we're looking at a couple of meetings, then, one Thursday with the officials from the department and then maybe have some of these groups for a meeting, not next week but the following week. That would pretty well take care of the witnesses.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I don't know if we will be here.

The Chair: No, I meant the week after the break. That would finish all of the witnesses for Bill C-12 and we can have three to four groups at the same time for a two-hour meeting.

Those two issues are taken care of, and the Tanzanian delegation is taken care of. The other thing that was on the list here is estimates. We have to do that before November 10. Could we just allow the clerk to schedule that in?

Yes?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Given the deadline, I think you're probably going to find, Mr. Chair, that we're going to have to intersperse the estimates with Bill C-12.

The Chair: That was my suggestion, that we let the clerk see when these other people can come.

The clerk would like to know who she's inviting with regard to the estimates. Who are we suggesting should appear before this committee on the estimates?

Mr. Joe Comartin: I would still like to have the minister back, given that we've had this change with regard to the gun registry. I think there are a couple of other items—I haven't had time to go through entirely the announcements last week on the cuts—but there are a couple of others the minister is responsible for. The other one would be somebody from the RCMP, which is now responsible for the gun registry.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but given the cuts, I don't know if it's the Treasury Board chair who should be coming in. I don't really care, I just want a minister here to speak to those cuts on the gun registry.

The Chair: We'll ask the Minister of Public Safety to come.

Are there any other items?

Mr. Holland, you had the issue of the arming of border guards, and we still have about eight minutes. Would you like to discuss something with regard to that?

Mr. Mark Holland: I had a list of witnesses, and the list was more exhaustive than probably is necessary. I also recognize that some others may want to put forward names.

I know, Mr. Brown, you had a name or two that you were suggesting that you would like to see added. Really, all I am looking to do is to get a confirmation of which list we wanted to go with and then an agreement that once we're finished with the items we've just agreed on and will be dealing with in the immediate term, this would be something we would deal with thereafter.

The Chair: At this point it looks like we're going to have a pretty full schedule for the next month or so.

First of all, do we agree that we want to do a study on the arming of border guards? How does this committee feel about that? Are there any comments?

Not hearing any dissenting opinions, we're going to go ahead with that. Then maybe in the next couple of weeks everybody can submit names as far as the witness list would be concerned. In about a month we can get together. I don't think we're going to have time for about a month, at least, to deal with this.

● (0950)

Mr. Mark Holland: The first meetings probably will be about a month away, given what we've put on our plate, and I don't have a problem with that. Perhaps we could make the job of the clerk easier, and in a couple of weeks' time agree on the witness list. That would give the clerk a couple of weeks to schedule those individuals instead of leaving it to the last minute and having the clerk running around trying to schedule.

The Chair: Okay, let's leave it at that. Submit your names for a witness list with regard to the issue of arming the border guards.

Mr. Mark Holland: And we'll firm up with that list of witnesses when we return from the break. Is that a good plan?

The Chair: Sure.

There are a couple of other possible items. Mr. Rosen had told us about a conference that is taking place here in Ottawa. How do we want to deal with that? It's not on the Hill; it's two blocks away. It would mean we'd have to have travel approved. This conference on terrorism is October 26.

Mr. Rosen, do you have any comments with regard to that?

Mr. Philip Rosen: My recollection is that it's a Thursday, Friday, and a Saturday morning. I think it's at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. I'm going from memory here. The Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies is Canada's national organization of practitioners and academic lawyers and so on who are involved in security and intelligence issues. It's been in existence for about twenty years and has an annual conference. This year it's here. There will be a particular focus on the follow-up to the Arar commission recommendations. From that perspective it may be of interest to members. As the chair said, it's not very far away. Also, the registration fee, I suspect, is nothing more than about \$200, which in conference terms these days is not very much. Certainly your staff would be interested in going if members aren't able to go.

The Chair: The clerk has just informed me that if any of you would like to go, you could inform the clerk and she could prepare a budget.

I would like to suggest this committee approve that our staff attend. They would then be able to brief those of us who are not able to go, or at least help us in further deliberations with this committee, with any information they may be able to glean from that conference.

Would you be willing to approve that fees be paid for our staff to attend? Are there any problems with that? Okay, I seem to see consensus for that around the table.

If there is no further business, I will adjourn this meeting.

Mr. Mark Holland: There is Mr. Ménard's travel with respect to Quebec.

The Chair: We have that trip that we'll have to schedule sometime. I don't know....

Mr. Mark Holland: Which trip is this? I'm sorry.

The Chair: Do you want to just brief us again, Mr. Ménard?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): In Laval, north of Montreal, there is an institute located in a research park of biochemistry or biomedical area where some fifty companies can be found. The institute responsible for their gathering is called the Institut Armand-Frappier which, during the last world war, started making vaccines for the Canadian Forces. It has expanded much since then. Its facilities include a two week supply of oxygen and water should there be a major disaster.

The institute does not ask for any grant, precisely because it developed around a research park where many private companies moved in. People in the institute wonder why when planning the government does not consider the role they could be playing. They have all the necessary equipment to face pandemics. For example, they are ready to face bird flu thanks to their ties with the Institut Pasteur, which has branches throughout the world. Incidentally, the Institut Pasteur has one branch in Vietnam and others in Asia where human cases of bird flu were reported.

What they do is as important as what is done in Winnipeg, and even more important in some respects. They had contacted me in order to make the government aware of their existence, which apparently wasn't the case since they ask the government nothing. But they want somebody at the federal level to know they do exist and can be included in the preparations for a potential far-reaching natural disaster with important medical implications.

They propose to meet with us. I think they've sent the chair a letter explaining they're ready to welcome us. I don't know if you're interested in visiting these facilities, but it's two and a half hours drive away. Many medical experiments are carried out there as well.

● (0955)

[*English*]

The Chair: We as a committee had previously thought this was a good idea and we were going to do this. If we can find a day sometime when the schedule is fairly light, we will likely attend.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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