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Chair

Mr. David Sweet

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• (1655)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)): Ladies and gentlemen, we are resuming our meeting now. We have gone out of camera into public and we're now considering Mr. Lake's motion regarding scheduling of our future meetings.

Mr. Lake, could you just read the motion before we go ahead to a recorded vote?

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): I'll just quickly clarify that it is in line with what the Honourable Jack Layton has had to say, that the Government of Canada should take immediate steps to amend the Investment Canada Act, and what Chris Charlton said, that it is a debate that is long overdue in this country. Brian Masse has said we could have committee hearings and there needs to be light shed on the process.

So I move that we immediately have five meetings to study the Investment Canada Act as per the motion passed by this committee, that we would take the next five meetings to study that, followed by four meetings to study the Bloc motion on the CRTC. That would be March 1, March 3, March 8, and March 10, I believe. Following that we would discuss Bill C-568, the Liberal member's motion that would impose \$500 fines for people who don't want to tell the government how much housework they did last week or what their religion is.

That's my suggestion, that we immediately move to the Investment Canada Act, which I think has been largely supported by members of all parties through statements they've made that they'd like to see a study of this done. I think it should be the priority for this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

Now we'll move to a vote on Mr. Lake's motion.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): I want to speak to the motion. I just want to make sure it's clear that we can and will study the Investment Canada Act.

In fact, actually we'll do a better study the way I'm going to propose it after this. I'm going to propose that we actually look at the CRTC's recent decisions for three meetings. Following that, we can then work concurrently at the Investment Canada Act, as well as on the census bill that has come forward. I think that could be done very well, and we can probably have more and better meetings for that. I

think they're very serious issues that Canadians do want to hear more about.

I don't see a downside on the CRTC decisions right now. I want to make sure we get the best witnesses possible, and I'm not sure we can do that by rushing through in the next couple of days to try to get people. On the Investment Canada Act, we might want some international witnesses to come forward too. For me, that gives us a chance to get our witness lists up and going, and we certainly can do concurrent meetings and we can actually review that at some point in time.

I also have a notation here that at some point, when Bill C-501 becomes clearer, we ought to spend one meeting to finish that bill too.

So I will be immediately proposing that, followed by Mr. Lake's motion.

The Chair: Following this impending vote.

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure we all understand that once the mover of Bill C-501 gets an indication from the House what they can do, we will be going to Bill C-501 in a meeting shortly thereafter. Is everyone in the room of that understanding?

The Chair: I think no matter what motion is passed by the agenda, there is a consensus by everyone regarding that.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Just a clarification from Brian regarding the Investment Canada Act. We talked about the witnesses and the number of meetings. Now I think we're talking about four meetings, because one of those meetings might be precluded by a discussion of Bill C-501. Is that enough meetings to schedule for the Investment Canada Act study, do we think, or is that reasonable?

• (1700)

Mr. Brian Masse: I think we can revisit that. I think what we do is start those studies and see how many witnesses come forth and see how long we need. I don't think we need to pigeonhole ourselves into the five meetings. I think what we can do is start those studies, because there will probably be a great public interest, and then not set an end date. We can actually go back into either a subcommittee or the general committee to address that if we don't have a witness list, if it dries up or whatever.

So my proposal is that we just start to get at these things, and then we can address that, depending upon the interest level we're receiving.

I've been here before with the Investment Canada Act. It has been studied by this committee in recent years, and it was very much.... We did an issue on national security. You can get the research back on that. I brought that back in 2003, I think, because it was about the Investment Canada Act, how non-state democratic governments could buy Canadian companies. We were opposed to that. We had a lot of witnesses at that time.

I think we might find that five meetings wouldn't be enough anyway, so my motion will keep it open-ended, and then the committee can be the master of its own deliberations.

The Chair: Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Concerning the study of the CRTC that was proposed, of course the minister has said he's carefully studying the decisions. Might it be a little more prudent for us—as a committee trying to take a look at what our priorities are in the limited amount of time we have to study the issues—to wait to see what comes out of that before we undertake a study that might start on Thursday? Might it make more sense for us to pursue the Investment Canada Act study that has been so important to so many members of Parliament? It has been raised time and time again in the House of Commons over months and months.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): On a point of order, a lot of this was discussed in camera. We didn't come out into a public audience so that Mr. Lake can do his commercials and ads for an upcoming election he wants to have. If he can maybe stick to the facts and stop the propaganda, we would all appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rota.

It's not the chair's responsibility to limit debate—quite the contrary; I'm supposed to encourage debate. Mr. Lake feels this is germane, and it appears to be germane to me.

Mr. Lake, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Lake: I didn't think that was really over the top. I'm talking about what the committee business is going to be, what our approach at committee is going to be. Yes, it makes sense to have this discussion in public, because we are discussing priorities for what the committee is going to discuss. I don't think that's an unreasonable thing to do.

We proposed that we study the Investment Canada Act first, because over the long term that is a subject that members of all parties have said has some urgency behind it. The minister has requested that the committee study that issue as well. So I think members of all parties...in the interest of working together to try to find something that is important for all of us to work together on and to study, this is a good thing. I think this is the subject that is of critical importance to the country, and we can all agree on that.

Before we undertake a study of the CRTC decision, it's prudent to see what the minister has to say after his careful study of that decision. That seems to make sense.

We have private member's Bill C-568 before us. We may disagree on the merits of that bill, but it's important that we study it. We have

a timeline of May 12, so we can abide by that timeframe by studying that bill once these other two issues are studied by the committee. I think we can all agree that they are important issues, and we've already come to an agreement that we want to study these things. Now we're just trying to determine the order in a way that makes sense.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

Now the speakers list is built again. It will be Mr. Wallace, Mr. Masse, and Mr. Cardin, in that order.

Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this motion. The motion deals with the Investment Canada Act and to begin with it in our next set of meetings, excluding the meeting set aside for Bill C-501, whenever it comes.

To be frank with you, this is interesting, being from Burlington, across the bay from Stelco and Dofasco, both now foreign-owned, one having difficulty, the other not. In fact, one announced an expansion, an increase in staff, and more investment. So I'm very interested in finding out why one investment in the exact same industry on the same street is successful and one is not. I am looking forward to it. I think it's an important discussion.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that of all the calls I get—there are lots of calls on individual problems, of course, and those are case issues and on broader policy—the vast majority have to do with either CRA or Investment Canada, to be honest with you, and what's happening with investment.

People will ask me, “How can your government allow for foreigners to come in and buy this?” My response, Mr. Chair, to be perfectly frank with you, is very polite, but I do ask them about what needs to happen for Canadians to be investing in Canadian companies. Why are Canadians, seeing what's happening in the world...? Why didn't Dofasco, for example, know that there were going to be amalgamations in the steel business? Why? They're a very big player, a very good player, with a quality product. How does their saying go, that steel is their business, but people are number one, or whatever that saying was? So why do Canadian companies wait to be sold?

Let's be frank about the Investment Canada Act. This government is the only government that ever turned down an investment. It's happened twice now. The potash one was the recent one, and a few years ago the Canadarm manufacturer—I forget the name of the company—was under threat of being sold to a foreign entity.

I watched a show last night on the CBC, or whatever. They had a roving reporter in Winnipeg and they were asking people why they weren't paying any attention to federal politics. I think today is an example of why people aren't paying attention to federal politics. There were lots of comments about how we should be working together, and so on and so forth.

At the end of the day, I think what the parliamentary secretary has proposed in terms of a priority for Canadians...it's a look at what we're doing in the Investment Canada Act. We came to a conclusion among all of us that we should study the Investment Canada Act. The parliamentary secretary indicated that people have talked about it in the past. He's quoted them. I don't have those quotes, but he's quoted other members of Parliament from other parties. It's a reasonable request.

The part to deal with the CRTC decision comes next in his proposal, and it's still in front of the length of time that's allowed for that decision, which is coming out at the beginning of March. So there is time for this committee to deal with those issues.

Is anybody paying attention? It's unbelievable. Are you paying attention to me? Oh, that's very good.

There is time to deal with the issues. Then, again, we talk about Bill C-568—

A voice: You have 21 more minutes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I can't do 20 more minutes, my friend.

• (1705)

Mr. Anthony Rota: Just for the record, they are filibustering.

Mr. Mike Wallace: No, Mr. Rota, listen, this is the exact same thing I said in our session prior to us going public in terms of what I think our priority should be. I'm saying Bill C-568—

The Chair: A point of order, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I would like to have the opportunity, before 5:30 p.m., to move a motion to extend time and ask for that unanimous consent. If the intent here is to filibuster, or not, I don't know... I'm not going to play that game. But I want to make sure that I get the chance to move a motion that we extend the debate until necessary to complete our schedule.

We'll need unanimous consent, which was granted to move out of camera by every member here. If people aren't serious about having this vote right away, and then followed by another vote if it doesn't pass, I'm hoping that we sit here and finish it. If we do not, that means nothing gets studied, not the CRTC decision, not the Investment Canada Act, and not Stats Canada—nothing gets done for another day here in Ottawa.

So my hope is that, at least procedurally, I have the opportunity before 5:30 p.m. today to extend indefinitely until we finish our schedule. I think it's reasonable that for two hours the committee could actually write a schedule, and apparently we're getting dangerously close to not doing that.

• (1710)

The Chair: Mr. Masse, I understand your concern. Sometimes debate seems onerous, but that's what our DNA is here.

Mr. Mike Lake: On that point of order, though—

The Chair: It's actually not a point of order.

Mr. Mike Lake: I want to comment on that. We support that. We'll take as long as we need to. That's fine. There's no intention to filibuster.

The Chair: I thought Mr. Wallace was making a point.

Go ahead, Mr. Wallace. Do you remember what it was?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Yes, I do, and I just want to finish up my comment, because the motion deals with the three items that we want to discuss. So I discussed the Investment Canada Act and the CRTC decision.

The final part, which was part of the motion, was that I believe we can wait on Bill C-568, which is a private member's bill and which, in my view, will probably take, at a maximum, a couple of meetings. It's not due to be reported back to the House until May 12.

So I'm supportive of what Mr. Lake has put forward, because I think the priorities are set out correctly and because there's time to meet the deadlines in front of us as a committee and as a House of Commons to deal with this.

I was not intending to speak for another 20 minutes, but if people want me to I certainly can.

Those are my comments based on the motion that is in front of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're welcome, Mr. Wallace.

I normally never enter the debate, nor would I now, but I would just like you to know that Mr. Wallace mentioned two companies—U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal—and he said they're on the same street.

Mr. Wallace, what street are they on?

Mr. Mike Wallace: It's Burlington—I thought you'd like that—in Hamilton.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'm just glad that we can hopefully have a vote on this and get to these issues. I'm ready to vote.

The Chair: There are two more people on the speakers list, Mr. Masse.

After you there are Mr. Cardin and Mr. Rota.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Please take my name off.

The Chair: Okay. There's only Mr. Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would ask that we vote on the rest.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no other debate, then, we will move to the vote on Mr. Lake's motion. It's a recorded vote, so I'll leave it to the clerk to do that.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that the industry committee study recent CRTC decisions for three meetings, followed by concurrent meetings on the Investment Canada Act and Bill C-568, with one meeting for Bill C-501, when appropriate, and report back to the House of Commons.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Wallace, then Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The question I have, and the comment—and the mover can say forget it or not—is that if we're going to do concurrent meetings, I'd rather have concurrent meetings, to be frank with you, on the Investment Canada Act and on the CRTC decision. We'd get those meetings done with and then we'd move to the private member's bill. Doing that would still move the private member's bill up sooner. There's no doubt about it.

I'm not a big fan of concurrent meetings, but if we're going to do them—and this obviously will pass one way or another—I think we should get started on the Investment Canada piece. I think in your own arguments you said that we don't know how many meetings there will be, and we may have to have a fairly long invitation period for people to come if they're coming from overseas, and so on. So why would we not do that? If the committee has decided that we're going to go in the format of concurrent meetings, then on one day we'll study one item and on the next we'll study the next different item, and go back and forth. We've all agreed that those are two big items for us. Let's do the concurrent meetings with those two big items. We'll get those done—maybe not by the first break but by the second—and then we'll deal with Bill C-568.

That is my suggestion.

• (1715)

The Chair: Mr. Lake, do you mind if Mr. Masse responds to that?

Mr. Mike Lake: No, that's great.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you.

I appreciate Mr. Wallace's trying to find some compromise in this, but here's the reason, especially with my having been someone who has studied the investment act at this committee in the past. What we found is that we had a lot of international and other types of witnesses who required some line-up. And there were some very important people. I think of Leo Gerard, for example, and I'd want to make sure his schedule was freed up to come and present. Also his industry; it is going to have some presentations as well, which are going to require some scheduling.

I'm really worried about that aspect of it. To me, it makes a lot more sense to just deal with the CRTC thing. It would be a week and a half. That's all we're talking about here. I'm glad there seems to be willingness now to study concurrently, because the census thing is still an issue out there. It's important. Those are the reasons, and I think we can handle it. I think this is a strong enough committee to be able to handle two studies at once. We've been ably served by our researchers and our clerk.

To me, it doesn't seem like a bad idea to do the CRTC thing, and I actually think it will help the minister. The minister, I'm hoping, is going to reject the CRTC's decision here. I think there is some good testimony about why this is such a serious decision that's taking place, and there hasn't, until just recently, been a lot of media commentary on it.

I think this can actually help the minister, because it will tell the story about what's at risk for Canadians and businesses with regard to limiting Internet usage.

The Chair: Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'm with my colleague Mr. Wallace on this.

It seems as though the Investment Canada Act has been a pressing issue up until the time we decided we wanted to study it as a committee, and suddenly it's not pressing anymore. I'm a little bit puzzled by that; I don't really totally understand. I mean, if we were to study it concurrently with the CRTC issue—typically we have officials lead off the first study meeting anyway—we're talking about two weeks before we would have anybody else appearing, assuming they go concurrently. It would be two weeks before we would have anybody else appearing before the committee as a witness. Certainly, two weeks is lots of time for us to get a witness here. Because we would be having several meetings on that issue, a witness could come five weeks from now. The study would still be going on. Certainly, that would give our witnesses lots of time to make their plans.

Again, I'm not in favour of the idea of concurrent meetings. I think we should be doing these things in an orderly fashion, one after the other. I think that would be the way that makes the most sense moving forward.

If we are going to have concurrent meetings anyway, and if the Investment Canada Act is a priority, then certainly we could very easily study the Investment Canada Act at the same time as we study the CRTC issue—if the Investment Canada Act is a priority for the other parties. I'll just put that forward.

Maybe I do have one question for Mr. Masse, if I can ask it.

What is the rationale for having concurrent meetings in the first place? Why would we not study one issue and then study the next issue, as we do all the time in committees? Why is there this need for concurrent meetings? I don't understand why we would want to meet on each of those issues half as much.

Mr. Brian Masse: It's simply called compromise. There seems to be an urgency to study two elements here. We have a problem with this committee not being able to move its agenda ahead. We're closing in on the time. In the spirit of compromise, I think we're big enough to do that.

In fact, I would add meetings on Wednesday, if we want to. I don't mind that. If we want to add some more meetings, I'm open to that as well, or we can extend the hours of our meetings. I'm open to that. To me, it's really just simply about compromise. Both of the topics are very important to me; we've been after them for a while. Once again, I really think that if we tried to rush to get witnesses for next week on the Investment Canada Act, we wouldn't have a full slate.

We're talking about individuals who are probably going to be testifying who have significant schedules. I want to make sure it's done the best way. Having been through it before, I know that's what took place. Perhaps our researchers can pull out the old reports on the Investment Canada Act over the years since we've been here. Mr. McTeague would probably remember a few of those meetings as well.

• (1720)

Mr. Mike Lake: Again, to comment, we don't have to have a meeting with witnesses, other than the officials next week, if we were going to have these concurrent meetings on the CRTC and the ICA that the opposition parties seem to want. We're willing to have concurrent meetings in the interest of compromise, but if the Investment Canada Act is a priority, certainly we can hear from officials next week in the one meeting that's scheduled for the Investment Canada Act. It would be two weeks before we would have anybody else come before the committee.

Again, if it's a priority, if it's as Chris Charlton said, a debate that is long overdue in this country, then certainly that would seem to make sense: that we would move forward and have officials on, say, Tuesday next week on the Investment Canada Act, and then on the following Tuesday, two weeks from today, we would have our first set of witnesses. If the witnesses Mr. Masse wants can't come two weeks from now, then the next meeting we would be having would be four weeks from now. I'm certain they would be able to come by then.

The Chair: Finish up the dialogue here. I have to go to Mr. Cardin.

Go ahead, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Of course, Mr. Chair. I'll be really brief.

The reality is that we have this very serious CRTC decision that has popped into the equation. The Investment Canada Act will be a priority and will get studied—so will the other things. But we can't ignore what the CRTC's decision has done. It has re-scoped Canada's Internet capabilities and the relationship with customers and businesses. It's quite significant.

I think we need to give the minister the proper support necessary to hopefully overturn this decision. If not, you will have net neutrality and throttling. The Internet will also become very expensive for small and medium-sized businesses and consumers. So I don't think it's inappropriate to get this week and a half devoted to the CRTC.

Once again, it's all about compromise, because this hasn't been an issue. I congratulate the members from the Bloc for raising it. Charlie Angus, from my side, has been raising it for a number of months. Once again it's about compromise, and I think we have that compromise to function as a committee.

It's not everything I want, but at the same time it's nothing I can't be willing to do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Chair, we have about five minutes left to decide whether we want to schedule a productive meeting with the CRTC representatives and the officials. I would ask every member to show some understanding because, as we all know, this is an urgent matter. March 1st is fast approaching, and we cannot afford to lose another meeting on setting priorities. We need to decide the matter today so that, on Thursday, we can have a discussion and a working

committee, so we can make faster progress. That way, we can move forward on this file and others.

I think we should support Mr. Masse's proposal to have the officials from the department and the CRTC appear on Thursday, so they can explain the CRTC's decisions. It is my hope that all the members will support that. So, if I may, Mr. Chair, I would ask that we vote on Mr. Masse's motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Further to the conversation we're having in terms of priorities, on the issue of concurrent meetings, the Investment Canada Act has been put forward as an urgent priority by all the other parties. So the motion as it stands basically puts off any decision, report, or recommendation that the committee might come up with, because it insists that for some reason it's concurrent with a census private member's bill, which I'm not sure I understand the urgency of at this point. I can understand that there is a difference of opinion and that members of this committee may feel strongly that this private member's bill is the right way to go, but you'd be hard pressed to attach any kind of urgency to passing this private member's bill through a committee prior to May 12, which is the deadline for getting it through.

On the other hand, I go back to several months of commentary on the Investment Canada Act, probably years of commentary on the Investment Canada Act for the NDP, articulating how critical it is that we study it immediately. Member after member of the New Democratic Party insisted that the Investment Canada Act should be studied immediately.

We had a motion to study it immediately in this committee, but it was defeated by the opposition parties, with the swing vote being carried by the New Democratic member. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. I don't understand it. But now we're dealing with a motion where we're actually pushing it down behind a private member's bill. We can all probably agree that while we may have a difference of opinion in terms of the substance of the bill, the urgency of the bill is completely political. There's nothing urgent that that bill is going to accomplish by coming through our committee. So I put forward that I think it's incumbent on us as a committee to pick our priorities carefully.

If we actually want to get beyond the partisan conversations that we're having, the partisan tone in Parliament, if we really want to move forward together and work together, we have to start focusing on what our priorities are, what is going to make sense from the standpoint of the good of the country. When a minister is carefully studying an issue like the CRTC decision, I think it's difficult to argue that the committee has anything to add to that equation by having meetings ahead of the other issues on the table.

Secondly, I think it's impossible to argue that Bill C-568 is on a par with the Investment Canada Act, as far as an issue of urgency for the committee to study. I think that's absolutely impossible to argue, so I do not understand at all why we would put those as concurrent studies.

I say it honestly, Brian, in the interests of trying to work together. I don't understand how that—

• (1725)

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. There's a lot of conversation going back and forth. It really should be going through the chair. It's just a courtesy.

Mr. Mike Lake: That's a fair comment. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Through you, I apologize to Mr. Masse as well. We try on this side to look at what other parties have said about what's important. I can't comment on discussions that happened in camera, but you can see from what was passed in camera that we came to some agreement on the issues that the committee is going to study.

There is some compromise going on here, but it seems to be compromise among three parties, not four. That's problematic as we try to move forward here, as we try to come to some kind of agreement on what we're going to do. We're going to come to a vote now, and I have a feeling I know which way that vote's going to go. I think it's completely inconsistent with previous statements by members of the other three parties.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

Just a caution, too—and this is a courtesy caution—we've had two members refer to a discussion that was in camera. Just be cautious of that. It was in camera for a reason—and of course you know the parliamentary rules around that.

Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move an amendment in my attempt for a compromise. My amendment would be that the concurrent meetings would be with the CRTC decision and the study of the Investment Canada Act, followed by the committee meetings for Bill C-568.

What I'm doing is substituting Bill C-568 out for the Investment Canada Act for concurrent meetings. And I'm more than happy to support that change, obviously.

Am I allowed to do that or not?

• (1730)

The Chair: It changes the intent of the actual—

Mr. Mike Wallace: How does it change the intent? It's just changing what order the stuff is coming in.

The Chair: Well, I think that's the essence of what we're talking about.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Okay.

In that case, Mr. Chair, I will not support the motion in front of me. I don't think the priorities are correct, to be honest with you. I believe a discussion of the CRTC decision is appropriate. I also believe that a discussion of where we're going on the Investment Canada Act is appropriate. I can tell you how I'm voting. I'm not voting for any the clauses; I'm not supporting what's going to happen there. It's going to pass and likely go back to the House. I don't think it should take up committee time as an "every other week" approach. This motion in its current state.... I don't think it's appropriate. I think we should deal with those other two much higher priority issues, and then when we're done with those, because we have till May, we can have a couple of meetings for the private member's bill on statistics.

I have a bit of a bug about private members' bills, I've come to the conclusion, whether I'm on this committee or on the finance committee. We have a finance private member's bill that's down to one sentence. Is that the right way for us to be making legislative changes? I remind our colleagues that if you want to make a private member's bill that the sky is blue, you ask the Library of Parliament which act that would fall under and they send you the legal wording. There is no research. There's no background to it. You can do anything you want with a private member's bill.

From a system point of view, I think they play a role and highlight an issue, which this one is doing. I don't necessarily agree with what's in the bill, but it does highlight the issue. It's not a priority for us, as a team of the Government of Canada, to be looking at it. That's why I think in the concurrent system, if that's what we're going to go to, it's much more appropriate to have the Investment Canada Act and the CRTC decision happening at the same time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I did have just one thing to add to that, and I meant to mention this before. Just a reminder to the committee that when we're dealing with the priority of a fairly political private member's bill, C-568, and the Investment Canada Act, and weighing the priority of those two, I believe we had 12 hours of meetings during the summer on the census issue. For Bill C-568, we're going to hear from the same witnesses we heard from for 12 hours—I believe it was 12 hours—during the summer in committee.

As Mr. Wallace said, to pass a bill that we all know is going to pass anyway—it's going to pass six to five in the committee. There's no question. It's going to pass in the House. We know that's going to happen anyway; it's purely a political exercise. Is it really a priority? Is that equal? The Investment Canada Act is a study that the NDP has talked about making a priority for years. For months, the Liberals have talked about maybe making it a priority.

How, when we are weighing the two, are those two equal and worthy of a concurrent study? What possible motivation could there be for studying those concurrently, other than a political motivation? I don't understand what the purpose is of having a concurrent study on those two issues. If we're going to study, if we're serious as a committee about what we do, if we take our role as parliamentarians seriously.... I think Mr. Wallace was alluding to this.

I know this sounds like a rant. It sounds like a filibuster, although we're going to extend the meeting as long as it takes, but I think this needs to be discussed.

What is our role as a committee? Is it just to be pawns in some political game or are we actually wanting to get something done? And this notion of concurrent discussion of two separate issues, there hasn't been a good argument put forward for it. I can't possibly understand why we would want to approach it that way.

From my understanding, the Investment Canada Act is something we actually all take seriously, so why not study that first? Mr. Masse wants to say something, so I'll let him....

• (1735)

The Chair: Have you completed yours?

Mr. Mike Lake: Yes. I'll let Mr. Masse speak.

Mr. Brian Masse: I think what it boils down to is that you still don't understand the importance of the census to this country. I'm not saying they're equal; it's just doing the studies at the same time. They are both important issues. And the private member's bill that's been drafted addresses a very serious issue that.... It's not just the information about the census. The census actually backstops all the surveys in scientific information in this country. I'm neither valuing nor judging either/or.

I know we've got a week and a half to work on the CRTC stuff, which I think is really critical, and then we can get on with the two studies. Maybe one will wrap up before the other and then we have extra meetings available for it. Again, I'm able to meet more. I'd be happy to do that if we want to fast-track the Investment Canada Act, and then maybe we can talk, not at this meeting but another meeting, about adding a Wednesday.

So those are all on the table. I think this is just a simple compromise on very serious issues. I think all three issues are very important. To me that's just simply where it is. Maybe you don't get it. That's okay.

Mr. Mike Lake: The issue isn't the importance of the census question. The fact is we spent 12 hours discussing it already as a committee. If we're serious about what we do as a committee, we have to prioritize some things. On this side of the table, we believe the Investment Canada Act and the study we're looking to do are important. We thought it was important to you too.

The Chair: I see no more debate.

We'll go to the motion that we would meet for the next three meetings around the CRTC issue and then have concurrent meetings for C-568 and the Investment Canada Act.

I'll go to a recorded vote again.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

Mr. Mike Lake: On a point of order, on that vote, I'm curious to know what the rule is when somebody inadvertently votes.... I'm just curious to know what the rule is.

The Clerk: It is the same, I would say, in the chamber and in the—

Mr. Mike Lake: In the chamber we have one rule.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean Michel Roy): We have as well. At what speed Mr. McTeague changed his mind makes a difference. I hadn't even recorded the vote yet.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay. I'm not making a big deal of it anyway. I'm just curious to know what the rule is. That's fine, Chair, let him change—

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I was bored with Mr. Lake's soliloquies here, so I fell asleep. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: On Thursday, then, we can expect to hear from CRTC and department representatives? We will begin with the CRTC?

[*English*]

The Chair: That's correct. Whoever is available for Thursday, we'll make sure they are here, Mr. Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Thank you very much.

• (1740)

[*English*]

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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