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Chair

Mr. Larry Miller

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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• (1555)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)): We are now in public.

The motion, Mr. Watson, is that the draft report, as amended, be adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That's carried unanimously.

Motion number two is that the report be entitled. Would somebody like to move this motion?

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): I so move.

The Chair: That it be entitled "Innovation"... What's your suggestion?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): I would say, "Transportation Technology: Let's Get Moving".

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: "Transportation Innovation" or what...? "Innovation in Transportation" or...?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Use "Innovative Transportation Technologies". That's your title. I just read it.

A voice: It's the orders of the day.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Yes, and if it's wrong, well, we have enough problems...

The Chair: The chair obviously forgot that. Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion number three is that the chair, clerk, and analysts be authorized to make such grammatical and editorial changes as may be necessary without changing the substance of the report. Who would like to move that?

Hon. Denis Coderre: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion number four is that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report. Moved by...

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion number five is that the chair present the report to the House. Who would like to move that?

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay. I believe that's all in regard to the report.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Chair, there's one more thing.

The NDP has a three-page minority report, and we'll submit it as written. I believe it has been translated and is in both official languages. We'll submit it and it will be appended to your report.

The Chair: Yes, so noted.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I just want to say two or three things, quickly.

First, thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we learned a great deal in the preceding months when we heard from a lot of experts and witnesses. One of the key areas in which I've learned a lot is that we live in a global world, and we need to look at standards occasionally that are European or Asian, allow those standards to be transferable, and allow the regulations to be streamlined by the ministry. That would unleash the power of the private sector to be more innovative. We heard that very loud and clear, and I'm glad the recommendations dealt with that.

The second point that I think was very helpful to note is that the government has a role to play from time to time in providing encouragement and support for new technology, especially emerging technologies. There's a bit of debate as to how active the government should be. My friends across the way think the government shouldn't be terribly active; others think that maybe it should be. There's a different definition of what active means. That's one of the reasons we have a minority report. We think it's a limited role, but I think government has a role to encourage innovation.

Third, the reason we have a minority report is that we firmly believe there are emerging technologies that can be rapidly applied to our transport sector. For example, around the world Bombardier has made us very proud with their electric trains. I've been on a few of them and there's no reason we couldn't have them introduced in Canada. That's why we have a minority report that talks about electric trains, electric buses, electric cars, and also about active transportation, such as cycling, and other areas, such as putting side guards on trucks to make them aerodynamic. At the end of the day, it's good for the environment, it's good for the industry, it creates jobs, and it moves products and people.

I want to thank the committee members. We were able to work together to bring this report to fruition. Thus, we want to submit the minority report to you.

The Chair: Thanks, Olivia.

Mike.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: On the same topic, I want to thank the committee for what I found to be a very enlightening process. There are some emerging technologies which clearly we should never go anywhere near, but there are a lot of emerging technologies that I hadn't even thought about, such as using liquefied natural gas as a fuel, perhaps as a stepping stone to a hydrogen-fuelled vehicle in the future that would be driven by electricity, obviously.

The use of international standards as a mechanism to pick winners and losers in the transportation field was clearly a problem. I think the government now understands that, or at least the members of this committee understand and after you've presented the report the government will understand that those problems that are hampering Canada's advances in the transportation field are problems the government should turn its attention to. That's not necessarily with the idea of spending money, but with the idea of finding ways to make our regulatory systems easier for the transportation sector to use, whether we're talking about safety regulations that are different from country to country or fuel-handling regulations that are different from country to country. You can't cross the border from Canada to the U.S. and vice versa with a propane vehicle because the handling regulations are different.

Those kinds of decisions by the government need to be looked at by the department, I guess. They need to be looked at with a view to making Canada's transportation sector more efficient and effective, to lowering costs for consumers, to lowering costs for government, and to opening up markets for Canadian innovation that we currently don't have in Canada. As Ms. Chow said, all kinds of Canadian innovation goes on in Europe, in China, and in India with Canadian products that can't be sold here because our regulations are such that those products are not permitted to be used here for safety reasons or other reasons.

One of those technologies we studied I would hardly call emerging, because electric trains have been in existence in the U.S. since 1908. They're hardly emerging, but they are emerging in the sense that Canada doesn't have any. We have not kept pace with the rest of the world, and unfortunately the main report doesn't get into any great detail on that. The minority report does suggest that the federal government has a role to play both in the regulatory system in convincing the rail companies that currently have oligopolistic or monopolistic control over their rails that they need to allow for the electrification of passenger rail and eventually of freight rail as well, as is happening in Europe. That's part of what our minority report intends to do, to put forward rationale and purpose for the electrification of some of Canada's rail system in a more efficient way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1600)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I think it's appropriate, though she's not here today, to thank our analyst for synthesizing quite a large amount of witness testimony and the interests of committee members into ultimately what we arrived at. I can't imagine that was a simple task in a short period of time, but I think she did a formidable job, and I think the committee should appropriately recognize her.

The Chair: That certainly will be done in the blues or the Hansard of the meeting.

Mr. Jeff Watson: It should be on the record.

The Chair: But we can still do that in person. That's a good point.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Chair, I think it's obvious that's the sentiment of the entire committee, and it should be on the record.

The Chair: Thanks, Jeff.

This has been good for me. I wasn't around for the whole study. I missed a lot of it, but reading through the report I learned a lot of stuff that I didn't know. Anyway, we're still on that learning curve going forward from here, and in order to....

Mr. Coderre, go ahead.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I don't want to filibuster for the sake of love, but I will still say a few words.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Love, inclusion, and no corruption.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Isn't that great?

[*Translation*]

I would not call this a dissenting report, but rather a complementary one. I think we have done a pretty great job. We did not always agree, but enlightenment comes when ideas collide. Some valuable work has been done. That is why the Liberal Party of Canada supports all the recommendations of this report. That is why I voted to adopt it.

Moreover, there are two things I need to point out. We discussed them briefly. First, I think the government has a bigger role to play in the development of new technologies. Second, I think we must discuss public transit in urban areas, and electrification in particular. So I would have a page or a page and a half to submit when you like, in both official languages. It is actually already finished.

I also want to add my voice to the chorus in thanking you for your work. The analyst has done a great job. Jean-François, you will be thanked in the next report, but I must say that the previous clerk, Alexandre, did some good work. Mr. Chair, you have transitioned nicely. It is rare for a Liberal to congratulate a Conservative, but you are seeing the new 2013 Denis Coderre. Thank you for your work.

•(1605)

[English]

The Chair: Well, it's no offence. I mean, all improvements are welcome.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Denis Coderre: And it can be mutual.

The Chair: That's right. Thank you, Mr. Coderre.

For the committee going forward, I think it's probably fair to say that to get witnesses here for Thursday would be impossible. It was my thought that we could possibly have a steering committee meeting that day. I'm not 100% sure that's necessary, but if you want to, we can.

Further to that, in order to get witnesses here for next Tuesday, I think to be fair to the clerk we do have some names of witnesses who I think we could get here for Tuesday. I would urge all of you as members to get your witness lists in, and then of course we'll go from there, but I think I can at least get started on that, if the committee will allow me.

Olivia, is that okay?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes, that's fine.

I would just remind people that it's on infrastructure.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Olivia Chow: We'll get some names in for you.

I don't think we need a steering committee meeting, because we know that we're going to be studying infrastructure. We said so a few months ago. I think the rail freight bill will be coming here soon, hopefully, and that will keep us fairly busy, right?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I just want to make sure that you have the authority to....

I suspect we're going to start with the infrastructure study for one or two meetings, and then we may end up stopping that because the rail freight bill might come to us, so—

The Chair: I'm not sure of the timing, and I don't know whether Pierre has anything to add, but you're probably right. We're probably going to have a few meetings, and then when the bill comes, that will take priority, as everyone knows, and we'll come back to this.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes. I just want to make sure that becomes a priority, because it's been something that the industry.... I know that the shippers have been desperately looking for action, so let's get it done.

I think it will be in the House on Friday. It should be done by Friday, so I assume there'll be votes next Tuesday.

The Chair: Tuesday or Wednesday of next week.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes. Probably it will end up here the week after, so we will have—

The Chair: Well, there's the break week.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Then I suspect it will be in front of us after the break week.

The Chair: Yes. The very earliest would be the last week of February.

Okay?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay. I don't think we need to have a steering committee meeting to discuss that.

The Chair: Okay, so everyone should get their witness list in, but I'll speak with the clerk and we can at least get started for Tuesday and go from there.

If there's nothing else, the meeting is adjourned.

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