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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1750)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I believe we have a new member. Ms. McLeod is joining us.

Welcome to our committee, which is very collegial and a pleasant place to spend time. Welcome aboard.

We will be ending at 7:30 at the latest because of resource constraints, but that should give us enough time.

The first item of business would be to adopt the report of the steering committee. You've had a chance to read it, I'm sure. I don't know if there are any questions.

Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Chair, I want to say something in regard to the witness list. I don't know if this is the time for that or if that's a separate agenda item.

The Chair: Well, the witness list is part of the report, I believe. Is it not, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Isabelle Duford): That's correct.

The Chair: Yes. So go ahead, Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you.

I had a chance to have a look at the list of witnesses. I think it's an excellent list. I really think it covers the many different categories of people we need to hear from to perform the study.

I want to propose an additional witness for consideration. If we look at what we're trying to study here, the motion says that we're looking into the government's recent announcement regarding a ban on single-use plastics. The study includes but is not limited to impacts on small business in the plastic production industry, including the impact on jobs and the impacts on human health and the environment.

I think one of the things that would be useful to learn about to achieve this is how the bill would impact the management of plastics and other waste. I say this because the management of waste and plastics will impact the plastic production industry, will impact jobs, will impact human health and it will have other environmental impacts, etc.

Currently, in my view, we don't have adequate expertise or a lot of expertise from the waste processing sector, and I just thought

that would be helpful, so I want to recommend someone, Chair, for that, if I may.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Yvan Baker: The person I want to recommend is Norman Lee. He is the director of waste management at the Region of Peel. He's responsible for managing about 500,000 tonnes of waste per year in Peel.

For those of you who aren't from this part of the country, Peel encompasses Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon. It's about 1.5 million residents. He's also a director and past chair of the Ontario Waste Management Association board of directors, and has 30 years of experience planning, building and operating waste management and diversion facilities. He spent the first 11 years of his career in the private sector as a consulting engineer specializing in the design, approval and construction of waste management facilities. Norm then switched to the public sector and spent 10 years at the City of Toronto before becoming the director of waste management in Peel in 2009. He's a member of many professional industry associations.

I think he can provide objective insight but also inform our study and help us to clarify what we hear from other witnesses in the early meetings.

I want to offer that to enhance the study.

The Chair: Did you submit his name previously, Mr. Baker?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I did. Yes.

The Chair: My question for the analysts would be, obviously—

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Before decisions are made, I'd like to make an intervention in here.

The Chair: Absolutely, but I just have a question for the analysts.

I know that the analysts use a kind of ranking to put together these panels. They have a first ranking, and then.... Did this gentleman, Mr. Baker, rank fourth or fifth? Are the analysts aware of this suggested witness?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I don't know, and if I made the mistake at my end, I'm sorry—

The Chair: No, sorry. I'm asking the analysts. I don't know which of the analysts—

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, could I just intercede briefly before they answer that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: I do apologize, Mr. Chair, but you know this is one of the reasons why usually when we consider witnesses, we do that in camera. We all may have very reputable people, but it's up to individual parties to kind of rank their priorities. We don't want to make it sound as though someone, as thoughtful as this gentleman is, was ranked a lower priority by anyone.

I think if we start getting into who is a priority and whatnot—and to be fair to all of those who participated, we were given a timeline for submitting witnesses. Again, this is on the committee's report, so if Mr. Baker wants to amend and put that forward, I would just say it would be a bit outside of the process that we've established.

Again, it's out of concern for reputations. We don't want to be saying who's high priority or who's low priority.

The Chair: Yes. I didn't mean it in the pejorative sense. I just meant that it is a system they use.

Anyway, what I'll do is bring it up with the analysts off-line.

If you've submitted the name, then the name is in the pool that is being considered, so we'll take note that you believe this individual would be a good witness.

Mr. Albas, do you have your hand up for something else?

Mr. Dan Albas: On that, I was going to say that if there are going to be any changes, there should be a motion that's brought forward. In fact, I would just suggest, while I have the floor, that I move that we receive the report. Then, if someone wants to make an amendment to it, Mr. Chair, you can go to that, just so we're in order and we can move on from that.

The Chair: The only thing I would say to that is that in practical reality—for example, when we're setting up the panels for the CEPA study—there are last-minute changes that need to be made or else we can't have a meeting. If I have to go back every time we change a witness, we're never going to get anywhere.

What I would ask is that you just give me some leeway, and I'll try to do my best. As I say, sometimes we have to reorder witnesses at the last minute, and if we have to go back to the committee for a motion each time we do that—

• (1755)

Mr. Dan Albas: No, Mr. Chair, I'm not asking for that at all. What I'm simply suggesting, though, is that we need to start with the basis of what's there and—

The Chair: Yes, for sure.

Mr. Dan Albas: —quite honestly, it's up to Mr. Baker and his party to submit a certain priority list of who those are. If someone cannot make it, then it would go to the next person. That's the principle of fairness.

To be fair, we should not be having these discussions as to who is a high priority or a low priority. I just think that it's better done behind closed doors.

The Chair: No, no, of course. That's not what I'm trying to do. What I'm trying to say is that some juggling needs to happen.

Mr. Baker, I believe, has submitted his name, and many other names have been submitted. I'll juggle to the best of my abilities based on input that we've received at steering committee and other requests.

Do you have something else, Mr. Albas, other than this?

Mr. Dan Albas: No. I moved that we receive the report, so we can debate it, or if Mr. Baker wants to make an amendment, he can do that.

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, you had your hand up.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): I was just in agreement with Mr. Albas that we could vote on receiving it.

The Chair: Is there consensus? Do we need a roll call vote or is there consensus to adopt the steering committee report?

Madam Pauzé?

[*Translation*]

Do you have anything to add?

No?

Okay.

[*English*]

There seems to be consensus, so we'll adopt the report.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I would like to draw your attention to three deadlines for submitting witness names for future work, future studies.

We need to get suggested witnesses for the meeting on Bill C-204 by February 24. That was agreed to, and that's in the report.

By February 22, we would need witnesses from all the parties for the meeting we're having on the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

By March 31, we're asking for suggested witnesses from each party for the M-34 study on “freshwater”.

I just wanted to highlight those, but as I understand it, the report is adopted.

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: For the next part of the business, I'd like to move that we... I put a motion in, a notice of motion. The supplementary (C)s were tabled this morning—

Mr. Dan Albas: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: —so I'd like to table the motion that I submitted before the meeting.

The Chair: Okay. Just a second.

Mr. Albas, you have a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: It's perfectly fair for someone to table something at any point, but right now the business of the committee is.... We did not necessarily have a vote or unanimous consent, so I'd like at least to take care of that business before we decide to go to other business.

The Chair: I'm sorry. What business are you referring to?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I heard the chair say that we had unanimous consent on the previous—

Mr. Dan Albas: Well, he didn't ask for unanimous consent. He just asked a question.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

I believe we do.

Mr. Dan Albas: In that case, then, it would be helpful to say that's clear. Then we could go to the next item.

The Chair: Well, I appreciate that. You make a good point, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Would you like me to read my motion?

The Chair: Yes, please, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: It's been circulated in both official languages and reads as follows:

That pursuant to Standing Order 81(5) and the Order of Reference of Tuesday, February 16, 2021, the committee consider the Supplementary Estimates (C) before the end of the current supply period and that the committee invite the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear in view of this study; that Deputy Heads in the Minister's Portfolio implicated in the Supplementary Estimates (C) appear alongside the Minister; and that the Minister appear for the first hour with Deputy Heads remaining at the table for the entirety of the scheduled time.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Would anyone else like to speak to this motion?

Mr. Albas, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I have a question for Mr. Longfield on his motion. I've remarked in previous meetings the desire to hold the deputy minister to her statutory responsibility to answer questions to Parliament in her capacity as an accounting officer. It seems that the language used here is "deputy heads".

Can the member please indicate whether that includes the deputy minister, yes or no?

• (1800)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes. I'm using that interchangeably. The deputy minister is.... Those are the financial officers who would be reporting to us. We missed them last time, and I wanted to make sure we had them this time for the second hour.

Mr. Dan Albas: Could I have the floor, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would like to make a formal amendment to change it to "Deputy Heads, including the Deputy Minister", just so that it is abundantly clear.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes. I consider that friendly. I mean, that's what I was indicating—

The Chair: Is everyone okay with that amendment?

Okay.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Is everyone okay with the motion?

Perfect.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The motion is adopted.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

The Chair: I see that Mr. Saini's hand is up.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): I would like to introduce a motion. The motion is as follows:

That the committee conduct a review of eliminating food waste from all points of the supply chain, from: producer to distributor, retailer, restaurant, and customer; that the study include an examination of the root causes of food waste in the supply chain, identify and assess existing solutions developed in Canada, and include best policy practices from other countries; that this study be conducted over six meetings, and the results be reported to the House.

The Chair: Mr. Saini has moved a motion. Does anyone want to debate the motion?

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, in regard to this, I'd like the Liberal Party or someone to clarify whether the intention is to have this studied instead of M-34 as the first study of the Liberal Party in our cycle of Bloc, New Democrat, Conservative and Liberal. It's my understanding that he already tabled three notices of motion previously. I'm just looking for some clarification.

Mr. Raj Saini: Can I speak to that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Raj Saini: Mr. Albas, as you can appreciate, M-34 was sent by the House, just like Bill C-206, I believe, or Bill C-208 was sent from the House. Those are two separate things. This is a Liberal Party motion, just like the other parties are putting in other motions, but the other two studies referred to are from the House, not from a particular political party.

The Chair: I'm having trouble with my screen, but I have Mr. Longfield next, then Ms. Collins and then Mr. Albas again, I guess.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I think Ms. Collins was up before me.

The Chair: You were up and then you were down.

Anyway, we'll go with Ms. Collins, Mr. Longfield and Mr. Albas.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): This is just for a point of clarification about the study. M-34 is directing the committee to do a study. To my understanding, in order to get support from other parties, there was an agreement that this would be either this round of Liberal studies or the next round. It wouldn't take precedence over other studies. I think the difference between that and the actual legislation that's being passed should be clear.

The Chair: Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: In terms of process, we had a notice of motion, but I don't think we actually adopted the motion from Mr. Saini. In terms of studies coming to us, it coincidentally came from a member of the committee through the House, but it still came to us through the House. I think at this point, adopting the motion and getting it onto our schedule would be something that we could be working on in the subcommittee.

The Chair: You would view that as a separate issue.

Okay.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, as a member of this committee, you could have brought this motion, your M-34, to the committee. I don't want to dive too deep into the conversations that were had, but it was always my understanding that the Liberal Party would either choose to do yours...and you made an argument that they should have more meetings than what other parties are asking for. For example, I think we said between four and six meetings and whatnot.

• (1805)

The Chair: Yes, we negotiated.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, to be fair, Mr. Longfield may not have been there and neither was Mr. Saini, but that was something we came up with together.

I would like to ask the question here, because M-34 has no timing on it, and it's really up to the Liberal members to decide whether they want four meetings or more for us to study Mr. Saini's motion, or they want to have M-34 come forward, which has seven. I've always put it to the Liberals to decide what they want to do, but we should know that and we should plan that, because it seems to me, Mr. Chair, that by agreeing to the steering committee report today, we've actually indicated that we would like to have witnesses go through a process according to M-34.

We need a little clarification as to who is first. Are we going to go to M-34, whereby we've actually agreed as a committee to open up a process for witnesses, or are we going to go by Mr. Saini's? Now, if we just want to have a vote on this and that's going to be the Liberals' next study after M-34, that's fine, but I would just ask Liberal members to decide which one.

The Chair: I think what Mr. Longfield is getting at is that the two are separate. You're right that the steering committee report mentions M-34. Mr. Longfield's point is on the substance of the motion and not the scheduling of it.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm fine if this is what the Liberals want. I just need to know from Liberal members which one they are going to do so we can schedule this.

The Chair: That's something for the steering committee, I guess.

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I was just going to say we should get it onto our docket so that the steering committee can deal with it. We do have a call for a witness list by the end of March. We'll see what the next weeks bring us. We will also have supplementary estimates (C) coming up. Bill C-12 will possibly be coming to us. I think we have a traffic jam in front of us, as I put it in previous meetings, and we have to figure our way through that, but we should at least get it tabled so that we know it's a motion that the committee has accepted, and then we can figure out the scheduling from there.

The Chair: Just to clarify, Mr. Albas, there is a time limit on M-34. Do we want to continue to debate the substance of Mr. Saini's motion? Does anyone want to speak to it?

Mr. Saini, you've spoken to it already, I guess.

Mr. Raj Saini: The purpose of my motion is really to bring together a process that actually affects all of us. It's not a motion that was meant to be partisan or to seclude or divide in any way. The motion was to see what would emerge from the food loss study. According to data that I have in front of me right now, pretty well 13 million tonnes of food is wasted every year in Canada. That's 396 kilos per capita. That's equivalent to almost 66.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in Canada. If you want to compare that, it's roughly equal to the annual emissions of about 12 million cars.

The other stuff that's sort of on the more personal side is that the amount of food that we waste could feed almost 24 million Canadians a year. This was an issue that I felt would bring us all together in a way, because we all represent diverse parts of the country and we're all dealing with some similar issues. I thought this would be a way to talk about things in a more succinct manner, because this has been brought to the media and other things. I think our committee could do this in a way that would be non-partisan and that would be really good for the country whether we are talking about the economy, agriculture or poverty. I think food loss is something that we should really focus on, and I look for support for this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm okay with the Liberal Party deciding that it wants to study this particular subject. The question I had was when it was going to happen. No one has been able to say that.

To be fair, Mr. Chair, you've said that maybe the steering committee can look at it. That's fine. I just would ask that the Liberals work with their vice-chair and their chair and figure out which direction we're rowing in. Quite frankly, if they want to say that we're going to do M-34 as our study, and then we restart the cycle and it's a Bloc study, an NDP study and a Conservative study, and then we'll see Mr. Saini's food waste, that's fine with me. I'm completely fine with that.

I just would like to say that it would be really helpful if members would talk to one another and figure these things out.

• (1810)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Schiefke?

You're on mute, Mr. Schiefke.

We seem to be having technical problems.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would suggest unplugging and re-plugging.

The Chair: I'm not in the room, so I don't know if the clerk is speaking with Mr. Schiefke.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Can you hear me now? I just unplugged it and plugged back it in.

The Chair: Yes, we can indeed. Mr. Albas's trick was fruitful.

Go ahead, Mr. Schiefke.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I fully support this. I think this is something that all of us can get behind. It's a bipartisan issue. We're all looking at reducing waste. We're all looking at ways to reduce our environmental impact.

As Mr. Saini pointed out, this touches on farmers and on the economies of families. It's something that I think we should definitely look at. If it's just a question as to where this is going to fall in our timeline, I have full confidence in the steering committee to be able to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: We've lost you again.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] Mr. Longfield is right. We definitely have a traffic jam coming. I don't know....

The Chair: My little screen shows Ms. Saks, Ms. Collins and Mr. Albas. Does that make sense to everybody? Okay.

Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I would just like to add, in terms of agreeing, supporting and doing the study, that a lot of the conversation, especially in the last 10 months, particularly in the urban centre that I'm in, is about food insecurity in relation to food waste. It's really a timely issue for us to be looking at, as my colleague Mr. Saini has mentioned. We're really looking at the whole chain and how it's impacting our communities.

There are certainly many models we can look at, starting from agriculture and moving through to food provision and how we make sure there isn't waste, and also addressing food insecurity and food disparity. It's really something that we should be looking at

Canada-wide in our perspective on this, as well as the impacts of waste as we go forward. I really think we should be making this a priority. It's an important conversation to have now.

The Chair: I can't take somebody's hand down, so if you've spoken....

Mr. Schiefke, could you take down your virtual hand, please.

Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I want clarification on the number of meetings. I didn't hear that when Mr. Saini was reading out his motion. Was it four or eight meetings that were being proposed? Six?

The Chair: Yes, that's what I see.

Mr. Raj Saini: I'm sorry. It's six.

The Chair: In the original motion, it was eight. Is it six now?

Mr. Raj Saini: Yes, it is six now.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I was just going to ask to see if the timelines had changed. What we said originally was that we should all try to aim for four meetings, but then up to six could be argued as to the reason why. I would ask Mr. Saini if he could explain why we would need six meetings, because, again, we do have a lot of potential legislation that will be coming to the committee.

Again, I have full faith in the process moving forward, but in dealing with these things, I would like to have perhaps a little more dialogue between the vice-chairs as to when these things are happening. I'm fine to see this progress, but I would like to hear an explanation to go to six, because I really think that this is more like four meetings and maybe five at best.

• (1815)

The Chair: We'll go to Madam Pausé.

Then, Mr. Saini, do you want to address Mr. Albas' question? I want to maintain some order.

Mr. Raj Saini: Yes, I can go after.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Be it four or six meetings, the motion is so broad that I think it would be worthwhile to target it more clearly.

I completely agree with Mr. Albas. We have much to do, so why ask for six meetings?

In addition, we were supposed to check whether we could hold meetings during break weeks. Are there any updates on that?

The Chair: Yes, we are looking into the possibility of holding a few meetings during break weeks. I have no answer right now, but that is one of our objectives.

Mr. Saini, would you like to answer these questions?

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Saini: Yes. I appreciate Mr. Albas' intervention and I think it's important.

When I initially thought of this study, I reached out to a lot of people. Based on the volume of information I received from them, I felt at that time that it should be eight. Then I realized, over the last few weeks of the committee meeting, that this is something that touches on many parts of the country and many different files on different issues. I thought eight might be right initially when I put it through, but I realize also that there is a traffic jam.

I appreciate your comments, Mr. Albas, and where you're coming from, and I would take your friendly amendment to make it five, if that makes you feel comfortable.

The Chair: Does Mr. Albas want to propose that?

Mr. Dan Albas: If it's helpful to the conversation to move it forward, yes, but it seems that Mr. Saini is trying to work together. If there's unanimous consent, I'm fine with that change to five. That's quite gracious of them.

The Chair: Should we vote on this? Would somebody like to call the vote on the motion?

Ms. Collins.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'll call the vote.

The Chair: Ms. Collins called it, but Mr. Longfield did as well.

Let's vote.

How do we proceed, Clerk? Does everyone say yea or nay?

The Clerk: We can do a roll call or say it was agreed to. If everyone agrees, I can just reflect that in the minutes.

The Chair: It seems to have been agreed to. There are no objections to that idea.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That seems to be it for the motions, I believe, which brings us to the draft of the ZEV study.

The Clerk: For that, Mr. Chair, we should be going in camera, so I'd ask everybody to leave this meeting and click on the link for the in camera Zoom meeting.

The Chair: Perfect. We'll see everybody on the other side, I guess.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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