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Wednesday, January 31, 2007

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ)): Good day, colleagues. This is my first time chairing the committee in the absence of Mr. Tweed and Mr. Bell. Mr. Thibault is sitting in today for Mr. Bell.

I'd like to welcome the new Liberal Party members who are joining us today: Mr. Volpe, Mr. Bélanger and Mr. Zed. Perhaps the Conservative Party will have a substitute member later. There is no change in the NDP and Bloc membership.

Today's meeting will be divided into two parts. The first part, which will be open to the public, will be devoted to committee business. You have received the notices of motion that were tabled. During the second part, which will be in camera, we will discuss future business.

I will now ask Mr. Julian to present his two motions. I believe he has a proposition for you.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome Mr. Zed, Mr. Volpe and Mr. Bélanger.

Since we have a new committee and since Mr. Bell isn't here today, I would prefer to postpone presenting my two motions until next week. I will check with the clerk to see when they can be put on the agenda next week.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): Consideration of Mr. Julian's two motions will be deferred until a future meeting, to be determined with the clerk's assistance.

This brings us to the notice of motion that I tabled. I believe you all received it. I'll let Mr. Carrier read the text of the motion and move it.

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): You have already received the motion. The purpose is to hear from those affected by re-mailing, a topic of interest to the entire country and one that raises many questions, in particular questions about Canada Post's operating procedures when it comes to re-mailing services, which are viewed as a form of outsourcing.

I ask that you support this motion so that we can at least hear from those concerned. They may be able to shed some light on these issues and thus help us to get a better grasp of the problem.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): As you all know, before the holidays, Minister Cannon answer a few questions concerning re-mailing. We want to invite the following individuals

to appear: the Deputy Minister, Mr. Ranger, Ms. Greene, the President and CEO, a representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and a representative of an international re-mailing business.

Of course, the motion will have to be voted on at an upcoming meeting. If it is adopted, we will decide when to initiate debate. Today, we're simply going to discuss the motion.

Mr. Bélanger.

• (1540)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I'd like to know the rationale for this motion. Is the objective here to have these four individuals appear at the same meeting, or to hold separate meetings?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): They could appear in two stages, at the same meeting. If we have two hours available, two witnesses could appear during the first part of the meeting, and the other two, during the last part. I think we can get a clear picture of re-mailing in one meeting.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations on your sitting behind the table today.

I would like to say that from our perspective, we have discussed this and I think we're in favour of the motion in general. I wonder, though, why would we include the deputy minister in this particular case? I don't see the benefit of it. I see the benefit in real terms of inviting the other parties to answer questions, especially the CEO and president of Canada Post; I think that's in all our interests and in the interests of our constituents. I would like to hear the rationale for inviting the deputy minister in this particular case.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: The goal is to call in a departmental official to hear different comments. This matter comes under the overall jurisdiction of Transport Canada. The goal is to discuss this service with the senior departmental official.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): Probably it isn't necessary. If not the deputy minister, then maybe we can invite a departmental representative in charge of this area.

If you move the motion, Mr. Jean, perhaps it will be agreed to.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: I don't have a name at this stage, but that's what I was going to suggest. What in particular—international remailers, or Canada Post rural mail delivery, safety issues, labour issues? Obviously the department is huge. Which particular issue do you want discussed?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Perhaps that is a question for the person presenting the motion, who today happens to be chairing the meeting and who may have—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): We could debate that point. Some discussions have taken place and the courts have made some rulings. We simply need to get a grasp of the issue. We can discuss security, but we can also talk about the position that the government plans to adopt vis-à-vis this matter.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Certainly. I think that if we could have an amendment on the motion to have a person who could answer the questions from the department on the legal status of Canada Post and rural mail—I think international remailers might be a separate issue, but certainly if you could amend the motion accordingly, I think we would be in favour of that, of having someone from the department to answer your questions specifically about Canada Post and rural mail delivery. Is that what I understand—?

Some hon. members: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: I think that would be acceptable.

In answer to your question, I'd like to provide you with an additional piece of information. The purpose of the meeting is to get some idea of the issues associated with re-mailing so as to arrive at a position on this matter. We have many questions right now to which we do not have answers. The goal is to shed some light on this subject and perhaps find ways to improve the situation.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Yes, I think that's wise as well. Obviously, the places that are most affected by this are Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, by my own information, and the citizens and workers in those areas. I think it's somewhere upwards of 10,000 people. So I can make an inquiry of the department, and if you could leave that person's name out of the motion, then I certainly think we can agree and we'll find somebody suitable from the department to answer all of the questions, whoever that would be—a senior official, of course.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: I agree.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): You would be prepared to table an amendment to remove Mr. Ranger's name, at the very least, and to call the responsible departmental official?

Mr. Thibault.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): I cannot even imagine inviting Canada Post or Transport Canada officials to appear before the committee without having questions for them about rural delivery. Rural delivery is currently a very timely subject for rural communities that do not enjoy this service. The minister has

promised that all communities will enjoy rural mail delivery service. We want to know how that will be happen and when.

If we invited the Deputy Minister of Transport to appear, he could bring with him experts of his choosing in two or three particular fields. It would be appropriate to invite the Deputy Minister, rather than make some amendments and decide on which experts should testify.

● (1545)

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Certainly we're at the will of the committee, as far as that goes. I think we're outnumbered sufficiently enough that we would have no other say, but I think rural mail goes without saying. It's very important to all Canadians, and we have to get some answers on that and I think it would be fortuitous. As the member knows, the minister did send a directive, and Canada Post has so long to conform to the directive and give us a business plan of how they're going to respond to that. So that timeframe still has not elapsed, but certainly I think we can be apprised of the situation.

When would the committee see the most reasonable time to have this meeting? Monday? Is that slow enough?

Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.): They'll figure it out.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): We will discuss this when we turn our attention to future business. If there are no objections, we will call the question on the motion. Later on, when we discuss future business—

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chairman, I think we're trying to say that it should be as soon as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): Yes, absolutely. I think we're all in agreement. The matter can be addressed when we move on to future business. What is important at this time is that we adopt the motion.

All right?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, we do not object to inviting the deputy minister or the President and CEO of Canada Post to appear.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): Fine then.

Would you care to move the motion, Mr. Carrier?

Mr. Robert Carrier: I so move.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): A motion has been moved by Mr. Carrier.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: It's unanimous.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Laframboise): We will now continue in camera.

The meeting continued in camera.

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