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Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

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Thursday, June 23, 2011

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•(1155)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-Marie David): Honourable members of the committee,

[Translation]

I see a quorum.

[English]

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order, or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

[Translation]

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

[English]

Are there any motions?

Go ahead, Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): I'd like to put a motion for Chris Warkentin to be the chair.

The Clerk: Mr. Rickford has moved that Mr. Warkentin be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Warkentin duly elected chair of the committee.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Thank you.

The Clerk: Before inviting Mr. Warkentin to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we will now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

[English]

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Go ahead, Madam Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): I nominate Dennis Bevington.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Duncan that Mr. Bevington be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Are there any further motions?

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Bevington duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

[Translation]

I am now prepared to receive a motion for the second vice-chair.

[English]

Are there any motions?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'd like to make a motion to elect Carolyn Bennett as the second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Warkentin that Dr. Bennett be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

[Translation]

I declare the motion carried and Ms. Bennett duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

(The motion is carried.)

[English]

The Clerk: I now invite Mr. Warkentin to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC)): Colleagues, first I'll say it's an honour for me to take up this responsibility. I thank you for the trust you've given to me in undertaking the work of chairman of this committee. My hope is to undertake this in a way that will continue to build trust among you and earn the trust you've bestowed on me. Thank you so much for that.

We'd like to move at least the one routine motion, which is with regard to the analysts' services. We want to make sure we have an analyst through the summer. Could somebody move a motion that the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist in the committee's work?

Mr. Greg Rickford: I so move.

The Chair: All in favour, please signify.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I have heard from some committee members that people want to get back to the chamber to participate in the debate and that there isn't a significant desire to go through the rest of the motions. Are people prepared to proceed in that fashion, or is there anything people wanted to undertake?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I think we would be content to discuss the membership of the steering committee and potentially the procedural rules for speaking and so forth.

I would also like the opportunity to put in a request for information to be provided to the members over the summer so that we can be expeditious and efficient in the next period. We can talk about that.

I know there were a number of matters before the committee before the election was called. Those matters would have to be referred back to us, and I don't know which of those matters were in camera and which weren't. It may be that some of the material has already been referred to us for the matters that were not in camera. One example is the report on the readiness of first nations communities and organizations to comply with the Canadian Human Rights Act. As that law is now binding on the federal government and the band councils, I thought it would be useful to at least get some of this information to the committee members, as they might want to start absorbing it .

Once we get the procedural rules set up, I would appreciate the first order of business when we come back after the summer being a briefing, an update. Could we discuss that as well?

The Chair: Mr. Rickford, did you have...?

● (1200)

Mr. Greg Rickford: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

While I would have otherwise moved to adjourn to accommodate the interest of some members on this committee in attending the debate, which appears to be the most pressing and substantial thing going on here on the Hill, it was my understanding that there was some consensus around considering, certainly from the perspective of the critic of the official opposition, our thoughts around some of the pieces of the routine motions that obviously have to be changed from the last session, given the different circumstances.

Normally most of the pieces of routine motions are fairly straightforward, but at the very least there may be one or two parts, including allocation of time, speaking order, and membership at the subcommittee, that in the spirit of cooperation and collegiality the critic of the official opposition could make inputs to before we just submit our position and put the question for the majority side of this committee to enforce or abide by.

I haven't seen any suggestions from the critic. It was my understanding that we would have a further discussion about what they might be, but in the absence of a desire to have that discussion, I'm prepared to table proposals for routine motions that would set out a position from this side. I'm prepared to try to do that today, but I didn't think we were going to do that.

Maybe we could give the opposition an opportunity to respond. Otherwise, I would move to adjourn.

The Chair: We do need unanimous consent to move into the routine motions. We did undertake to review the first routine motion and we did pass it, so we're into it, but I would seek unanimous consent to continue through routine motions if we are going to do that today, because it wasn't one of the orders of the day.

I am at the will of the committee.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm fine either way. The government members are the ones who are best apprised of timeliness in matters that might be put before us immediately when we return in the fall. I was simply trying to be efficient.

We could also deal with all those matters at our first meeting in the fall and just agree that we will meet immediately in the meantime on the procedural matters, which I imagine won't take more than five minutes to decide, given you have the majority.

The Chair: I think I understand there's a will to defer the remainder of the routine motions until the first meeting of this committee and a consensus that we then would utilize the rest of that meeting, either as a full committee or just as the steering committee, to determine a game plan in the fall. I suspect we'll have a little bit more clarity through the summer.

Ms. Linda Duncan: You are saying it's the steering committee.

The Chair: Right. I think it would be the routine motions that would determine that, but I think it may be useful if representatives of each party get together. I don't know who that would be, but I imagine that Mr. Rickford and the critics could get together and hammer out some of this so that we won't be like some other committees, which are having lengthy debates on routine motions.

If we could have that solidified through consensus, we may be able to move through it expeditiously at the next meeting, if that is the will of the committee.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Chair, I am certainly willing to make an undertaking to this committee that upon the second sitting, which would officially be the first one of the fall session, all the details of the routine motions will be agreed to and that the votes for them will take place with very little debate, if any, because they will have been decided. We can go right into subcommittee, because the composition of that subcommittee will have been decided and will only lack the authorization or the mandate from the committee vote.

•(1205)

The Chair: I think I'm getting a general consensus that we should proceed in that way.

I think there's a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Linda Duncan: We didn't deal with my second matter.

The parliamentary secretary would know best about this matter, and I see no reason that the committee as a whole can't just be apprised of it. The only matter that I know has already been referred to our committee is the report I mentioned. I'm just wondering if the parliamentary secretary could inform the committee if there are other matters that have been referred to this committee or are imminently to be referred to this committee.

Mr. Greg Rickford: We're developing that plan over the course of the summer, and certainly I'm happy to take up consultation with you on what those will be.

We haven't moved, as of yet, beyond a proposed or preliminary sense of some things. We know there are some key pieces of legislation left over from the last session that we'll have to deal with, and by way of accommodation there may be things that the opposition parties are interested in doing. I think we also have the summer to start looking at, and will receive, ideas around reports that would be for the benefit of this committee and constituents we serve. That's pretty much the way it goes.

As far as live briefings on any matters are concerned, I think there are two standard practices. One is that they take place during the

actual session. The other is that those briefings are available, meaning you're free to arrange them for the benefit of your members. Alternatively, we can look at when it's appropriate to have a briefing for the benefit of all members on specific topics that arise in the agenda that we haven't developed yet.

The Chair: Did you get the—

Ms. Linda Duncan: It appears that the answer is there's no interest in identifying some of the materials that might be of use for us to read over the summer.

The Chair: As the chairman, I haven't got—

Mr. Greg Rickford: There's lots of interest, to be clear. It's just that we don't have that set out right now, and I think part of the process is to accommodate and understand what is on the minds of the opposition members.

The Chair: I will move to adjourn, but I think there would be some benefit in a discussion among yourselves.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Probably there will be time to do that. We'll see.

The Chair: Well, we're going to be there until midnight or later tonight, I think, so we'll meet in the halls.

Ms. Linda Duncan: You're being optimistic.

The Chair: Yes, I'm being optimistic.

The meeting is adjourned.

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