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—
Chair

Mr. Brian Pallister

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Standing Committee on Finance

Monday, May 1, 2006

• (1540)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Elizabeth Kingston): Honourable members, I see we have quorum.

In accordance with Standing Order 106(2), our first order of business is to proceed to the election of the chair. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, CPC): I'd like to nominate my colleague Mr. Pallister for chair, please.

The Clerk: It's been moved by Mr. Turner that Mr. Pallister be elected chair of the committee.

Any further motions?

There being no further motions, I declare Mr. Pallister duly elected chair of the committee.

Prior to Mr. Pallister taking the chair, we will proceed to the election of the two vice-chairs. The first election is for vice-chair from the official opposition. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. McCallum.

Mr. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): I nominate John McKay.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): I would like to nominate Mr. Massimo Pacetti.

[English]

The Clerk: Any further nominations?

There being two nominations for the position of—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Are these nominations for the position of vice-chair from the official opposition only?

The Clerk: Yes. There are two nominations for the position of vice-chair from the official opposition: Mr. McKay and Mr. Pacetti. We will now have a vote by secret ballot.

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): No, I'll withdraw my name.

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee that Mr. McKay withdraw his name? Do we have consensus?

I therefore declare Mr. Pacetti duly elected vice-chair, official opposition, for the committee.

[Translation]

We are now electing a vice-chair from an opposition party other than the official opposition.

Mr. St-Cyr, please.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I nominate Mr. Yvan Loubier.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations? Since there are no other nominations for the position of vice-chair from an opposition party other than the official opposition, I declare Mr. Loubier duly elected vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

I would now like to invite Mr. Pallister to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): First of all, thank you, colleagues. I look forward to the important work we'll do together.

I also want to communicate to you the fact that I take very seriously the responsibilities of chair. I do bring with me some relevant background, in that I was a referee for a number of years. I understand that the best-officiated games are the ones in which the officials are not that much noticed, and I'll endeavour to be as fair as I can in my presiding over the discussions we have. I also assure you that I will do my best to apply the rules of our discussion equally well to all members of our committee.

I thank you for the challenge of this role.

We'll proceed with routine motions. I'll ask for the clerk's guidance, of course, as I go through this.

You all have, I believe, copies of the routine motions in front of you. We'll begin with the first motion, regarding the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament.

Hon. John McKay: I so move.

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

• (1545)

The Chair: I'd like the analysts to come forward, please. I would like them to introduce themselves to the members of the committee.

Ms. June Dewittering (Committee Researcher): Hi, and congratulations.

I'm June Dewittering, acting principal with the economics division of the parliamentary and information research service of the Library of Parliament. I've served this committee for a number of years now. I also serve the Senate banking, trade, and commerce committee.

Mr. Alexandre Laurin (Committee Researcher): I'm Alexandre Laurin, and I'm an analyst with the parliamentary research branch as well.

The Chair: Thank you, and welcome aboard.

We'll now proceed to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. Do I have a motion in that respect?

Mr. Pacetti moves that. Thank you.

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

The Chair: Next, on reduced quorum, can I have a mover for that, please?

Mr. Dykstra, thank you.

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

The Chair: On the distribution of documents, do I have a mover?

Mr. Savage, thank you.

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

The Chair: Working meals.

Mr. Turner, thank you.

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

The Chair: Witnesses' expenses.

Monsieur Loubier, thank you, sir.

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

The Chair: Staff at in camera meetings, a mover for that, please.

Monsieur St-Cyr, merci.

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

The Chair: In camera meeting transcripts.

Mr. Pacetti, thank you.

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

The Chair: On the notice of motions, a mover, please.

Madam Ablonczy, thank you.

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

The Chair: Thank you, committee members.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask unanimous consent for the motion that when we're questioning witnesses, the first round of questioning be seven minutes and the second round of questioning be five minutes. I think that is the usual practice.

The Chair: That has been the practice.

Is there any discussion on that motion?

Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Speaking as a former committee chair, we had a schedule where the Liberal members.... Well, in the prior Parliament, the Conservatives went first, the Bloc went second, the Liberals went third, and then the NDP went fourth, if I'm not mistaken. Then we repeated the cycle, but the NDP was dropped.

So perhaps we can draw up a schedule at least. We did in fact use seven-minute rounds, but we want to make sure that all members are allowed to ask questions.

The Chair: I have a copy here of the order, as it was adjusted, of course, as a result of the government change. Would it be all right with committee members if I just read through this quickly and we'll see if we can get agreement on that? Okay.

Just to review, then, on questioning of witnesses—and this would follow the practice prior to the last election—the first round, again, was seven minutes, if I recall, and would proceed as follows: Liberal Party first, then Bloc, NDP, then Conservative. The second round would be five minutes, and that would go Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative. And then the third round, also five minutes, would be Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, and Bloc, NDP.

That was the process, as I understand it, that we used last time. Is there any discussion on that?

Do I have approval for the motion?

Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Chair, that may have been the procedure in some of the other committees, but I think in fact we had Conservative, Bloc, and then NDP or Liberal. We switched them. But you've got to keep in mind there are four Conservatives, not five, because you're the chair—

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: There are going to be four Liberal members, so we want to make sure they're all going to be—

The Chair: What is the change you would suggest, Mr. Pacetti?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I would say the first round is fine—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative—but on the second round you've got to go Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, and then you start again, Liberal, Conservative, and then you go back to Liberal, Conservative, and NDP.

The Chair: One more time, please, Mr. Pacetti. On the second round you're suggesting...?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: The second round would be Liberal, Conservative, Bloc; the third round would be Liberal, Conservative; and the fourth round would be Liberal, Conservative, NDP.

• (1550)

[Translation]

The Bloc Québécois would get two turns. The Liberals and Conservatives must intervene four times.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Do committee members wish Mr. Pacetti to repeat that? Are you satisfied—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Chairman, could you repeat the formula proposed by my colleague?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti, would you repeat your order, please?

[Translation]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I suggest that the interventions follow the following order: for the first round, the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois, the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party; for the second round, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois; for the third round, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party; for the fourth round, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and, if there is any time left, the New Democratic Party.

[English]

The Chair: Any discussion?

Madam Wasylcyia-Leis.

Ms. Judy Wasylcyia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Well, obviously, it's the worst possible scenario from my vantage point. Do you have any other examples of committees that provide a slightly different rotation to ensure perhaps another NDP interjection, as opposed to trying to cover off every single member, which I don't think is the intention of the committee rotation?

The Chair: As I understand it, this would actually give precedence to a second NDP question ahead of the formula we used before, so actually—

Ms. Judy Wasylcyia-Leis: Oh, does it? Is it any better?

The Chair: It would advantage the NDP—

Ms. Judy Wasylcyia-Leis: I always I thought it sucked before.

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Loubier.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Chairman, it is very rare that we make it to a third or fourth round of questions. Normally by the third round — and Massimo can confirm this — we are responding to requests. Certain members wish to speak again and if there is any time left they ask the chair whether they can do so. We don't want our routine to become too rigid.

[English]

The Chair: Point accepted, Mr. Loubier.

Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I have in writing at the office what we had agreed on.

There is another point as well, and I think, Judy, you brought this up. When the ministers are here from the government, the Conservatives actually drop off and move down so that the opposition members have more of a chance. That was never formally done, but it was accepted by the committee members.

So on the first round the Conservatives would go, but we try to put in an extra round of questioning for the opposition members.

The Chair: If you'd like to come forward with a suggestion on that, Mr. Pacetti, at a subsequent meeting—

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I can provide you with copies of what I have drawn up. We approved it at our second meeting, not at our first meeting. I didn't bring it with me. I have the two, when the ministers come and when the ministers don't appear.

A lot of times, though, if you add them up, even five minutes, you're going to be way over an hour, and depending on who we're going to have here, it's not going to be enough time.

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti, as to your suggestion regarding a revised order when a minister attends, I'm sure the committee would be willing to deal with that at a subsequent meeting. I believe our clerk can provide us all with copies of that proposal.

Let's finish with the motion from Madam Ablonczy. Are we in agreement?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: I agree to those additions.

The Chair: All right.

Does there need to be any further discussion on the order, as we have dealt with it here? Very good. Seeing as there is support for that, we'll proceed with that order.

Now, what other subsequent business do we have?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Do we need a vote on that, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: I think we had consensus on that, but if you like, we can have a vote.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: No.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Pacetti?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Before we go, another point of order is whether we need a resolution for any documentation or testimony that was presented in the prior Parliament. Or is that going to be—

The Chair: We can discuss that at our next business meeting. Very good.

Mr. Loubier, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Chairman, we also need to table a motion requesting that briefs and documents tabled with the Standing Committee on Official Languages be in both official languages. If you wish, I could be responsible for that motion and give it to you in writing at the next meeting.

• (1555)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Loubier, I believe we have dealt with this one under distribution of documents in our previous routine motions. So the issue of both official languages that you've just raised is agreed to.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Very well. That one had slipped my mind, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra, go ahead, please.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to introduce the following two motions to be added to the routine motions of the Standing Committee on Finance.

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra, you would require unanimous consent from committee members to proceed with these.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Then I would ask for unanimous consent to proceed.

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra, would you like to quickly outline what these motions entail, without reading the motions, just to give an idea of whether you'll get consensus or not here, or approval?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: What I'm looking for is that whenever main estimates or supplementary estimates are tabled in the House, the committee invite the minister or relevant senior officials of the department to appear, and second, that whenever a chapter of a report of the Auditor General refers to a subject, that the Auditor General or senior officials be given the opportunity to appear at the meeting.

The Chair: Is there consensus here? Will we give leave to Mr. Dykstra?

Yes, Mr. McKay? Do you have a question?

Hon. John McKay: I'm not clear on what the point of the motions is, because the committee is master of its own proceedings. I would have thought that if there was a tabling of anything, the committee—

The Chair: Prior to entering into discussion on this, I'll ask again if there is leave to ignore the notice of motion prior, and then we'll get on to the discussion.

Hon. John McKay: There is no leave to ignore it, but I think that I'd like to hear what the reasoning is.

The Chair: Unless there is leave to discuss the motions, then the motions will be tabled and we'll deal with them in 48 hours. Fair enough? Thank you very much.

Mr. Pacetti has another item.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I think we had this, informally again, last time, but I would like to introduce it formally. It was a motion or a request by Monsieur Loubier.

[*Translation*]

Since this committee enjoys significant visibility, it would be good, insofar as possible, that we meet in this room and that meetings be broadcast. The clerk could...

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Pacetti. Forgive the interruption, but I believe we'll also need to have leave to deal with your suggestion.

Is there leave to discuss this motion? Okay, thank you.

Please proceed, Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Seeing as this is one of the high-profile committees, and our finance critic is going to want to have as much air time as possible, I'm wondering if we can make a request to the clerk that we have this room, whenever possible, or the room next door scheduled for our hearings.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that motion?

Mr. Turner.

Hon. Garth Turner: No, I'm just heckling.

The Chair: Okay. Heckle and a point. Thank you.

Any discussion on that? Do we have agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis, please.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: I know, Mr. Chair, you've just started, but is there a recommendation for a steering committee or executive committee? If we could agree on the committee, we could meet tomorrow afternoon.

The Chair: Madam Wasylycia-Leis, in answer to your inquiry, the second routine proceedings motion that we adopted was that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, and a member of the other opposition party. That subcommittee can proceed to meet as we decide, and you will receive an invitation to that meeting. I assure you.

Is there any other business for the committee today?

We are adjourned. Thank you.

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