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Chair

Mr. Gary Goodyear

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•(1135)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC)): Colleagues, we'll start the meeting. We are in public at this moment, so we'll open the floor to issues.

Mr. Godin, you had your hand up first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): When a report is endorsed in this manner, must the chair inform the committee, when the meeting is open to the public, that the report has just been adopted?

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Yes, the report must be agreed to at a public session.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Really? Could we then dispense with this right away?

[*English*]

The Chair: We can, sure. We've got lots of movers and shakers out there, so you can write down whichever one you want.

Does the committee agree that the report be adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Does the committee authorize the chair to table the report in the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Right now, immediately.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Monsieur Godin, did you have anything further to bring to the committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have two comments, Mr. Chairman.

First, at the meeting of December 7, 2006, Ms. Redman mentioned that an investigation was being conducted in Parkdale—High Park, that is in Peggy Nash's riding. A communiqué was sent to the clerk, but it's not up to her to set the record straight. That's our job. It was suggested that I could do that.

Nothing in the way of an investigation was carried out in this riding. No action was initiated. Consequently, the record of the

December 7 meeting is inaccurate. I would also like the record to state that no investigation was conducted in the riding of Parkdale—High Park.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

I have other colleagues up on this issue. Monsieur Guimond, you are next on my list, but are you okay with allowing Mr. Proulx?

Mr. Michel Guimond: Yes, yes.

The Chair: Mr. Proulx, on this matter.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: On a point of clarification, I stand to be corrected, but could we check one of the visits we had from Mr. Kingsley? Members of the committee brought up different difficult situations that had occurred in the 2006 election, and Mr. Kingsley had committed himself to looking into them. I was under the impression that this was one of the ridings where we had asked him on numerous occasions and then finally he accepted that he was going to look into it. Could we possibly check the transcripts?

The Chair: I see no problem doing that, so we will do that. Thank you.

Monsieur Guimond, and then Mr. Owen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: You wished to comment about another matter.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's right.

[*English*]

The Chair: One more? On the same matter?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, not the same matter. If you want to... Okay.

The Chair: Then Mr. Guimond is next. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: I'm curious about one thing. Perhaps James could look into this or enlighten us, if at all possible.

Regarding the readjustment of electoral boundaries, the next decennial census is scheduled for 2011. However, the smaller, less elaborate census can result in certain electoral boundary changes.

I was elected in 1993. I recall that a small census was held in 1996. Decennial censuses were held in 1991 and 2001. Some seats were redistributed in the case of the 1997 election. As my riding had become too populous, I lost a small community of 3,500 or 4,000 individuals. I did not gain any new constituents. I simply lost some.

Obviously, the reality is that with a minority government, there is no way of knowing when the next general election will be held. Nevertheless, this interim census was supposed to have been done in 2006. In the event of an election call, would Elections Canada redistribute some seats on the basis of 2006 census data?

[English]

The Chair: *Merci, Monsieur Guimond.*

I will defer to Jamie.

Mr. James Robertson (Committee Researcher): The short answer is no. At present, there is no provision for a census to be conducted on the basis of the quinquennial census in 2006.

After your first election, because the redistribution following the 1991 census had been delayed and legislation had been introduced both by the Mulroney government and later by the Chrétien government, the redistribution based on the 1991 census did not take effect until 1996. Your first election should probably have been under the 1991 figures, but it was still under the 1981 figures. So there was no census redistribution then.

The predecessor of this committee in 1995 recommended, as part of a draft bill, that there be redistribution at five-year intervals if population had changed significantly in a province. That had been a recommendation of the Lortie commission as well, and it was primarily for areas such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, where there is enormous growth in the suburbs. That bill was never passed. It was included in the subcommittee report, which we have just decided to re-table, and in their response, the then government indicated that it was one of the issues that they would look at. But at present, there is no provision for any changes until after the 2011 census.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Owen.

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I understand that by a previous resolution of this committee in the 38th Parliament with respect to electoral reform, which was in the Speech from the Throne in September 2004, this committee would consider holding cross-country consultations or meetings with the public, and a consultation process also would be established by the government, I suppose.

The government announced last week that a consultation with Canadians and a polling of Canadians was to take place. I think that's a good idea. My only concern is that this committee, in this Parliament, having been involved previously with the issue in the previous Parliament, not let that drop; and in terms of our role as parliamentarians and this committee's mandate, which would encompass electoral reform, that this committee, on behalf of Parliament, conduct hearings across the country on electoral reform.

As we know, colleagues, this is a big issue in British Columbia. There were consultations by a citizens assembly, which in the last provincial election led to a referendum being called that received 58% in favour of the alternate to the status quo. That will be reintroduced after further public discussion, before the next

provincial election. And we know that Ontario has a citizens assembly that is under way as well.

I think citizens assemblies are an interesting exercise. Obviously it's an issue of civic engagement that can work well, but I think the first responsibility to consider issues of such importance to the democracy of our country rests with Parliament, and I would suggest that this committee is the proper locus for such hearings.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lukiwski, on this topic.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Owen and I have had discussions on this before. I would suggest perhaps, Mr. Chair, if the committee agrees that this is an issue worth discussing and considering, that we put it on the agenda for future business and establish, whether it be next week or the week after or something, that this is an item of discussion. I think it might take some time to get all the views of the committee members, so I would support Mr. Owen in putting it on the agenda at some time in the future.

The Chair: Jamie has just suggested, and I think it's something we will follow, that we get a copy of the committee report and redistribute it to our committee members in preparation for that discussion.

We do have on the agenda to review the second half of the electoral reform. So that's already on the agenda, but ultimately we'll bring this up. Let's get the report out first, and then we can bring it up in another meeting and discuss that at our earliest convenience.

Monsieur Godin, you're next on my list, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I had raised the issue of ministerial cars and of drivers who leave their car engines idling in cold weather. I know you want to defer consideration of this matter until next Thursday.

I spoke to a government colleague and there just may be a solution, if colleagues are amenable to a change. Instead of directly asking the Speaker of the House to enforce the directive of the former speaker, we could send a letter to the Board of Internal Economy requesting that an area be set aside for drivers to take refuge from the cold, because clearly we don't want them waiting outside. Workers are entitled to a heated environment.

According to Mr. Lukiwski, the government is prepared to resolve the problem. As far as I'm concerned, the problem could have been resolved right here, because I'm certain that the government has some free space in the Centre Block. There might even be some space available in the whips' offices, because the whip isn't on the ground floor, but on the second floor. Perhaps there is some unused space, but far be it for me to suggest which area should be allocated to them. Surely the party has a vacant office somewhere where drivers could wait—provided there is more than one area. This issue is one that should be resolved fairly quickly.

[English]

The Chair: I'm happy to go to Mr. Lukiwski.

I just want to remind members that Jamie will have a briefing note on this issue for us on Thursday and we intended to deal with this in that fashion.

Is that correct?

Mr. James Robertson: We can have a draft letter to the Speaker as per Mr. Godin's suggestion.

• (1145)

The Chair: Just so you know.

Mr. Lukiwski, please.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to support Mr. Godin's comments. He and I spoke just before the meeting convened. I indicated to Mr. Godin that we're supportive of having the Board of Internal Economy, at least, assign some sort of common waiting area for all of the ministers' drivers; and also, to further that, to deal with the concerns of pollution, to instruct the ministers, when they're obviously in the waiting area, to turn the cars off so the cars aren't idling. This could be in times of inclement weather, I suppose, only. In the summertime when the weather is fine, I think most of the drivers want to be outside, because they probably all have cigarettes that they have to dispense of.

I would just underscore that we—

Mr. Marcel Proulx: That's another point we should cover—cigarette smoke.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: There you go.

We support the initiative that Mr. Godin is suggesting, but we just think it should be recommended to the Board of Internal Economy. Our recommendation to them is to deal with this matter expeditiously—find a common spot for the drivers, let them come inside, and instruct them to turn their cars off so we don't have the idling situation we do now.

The Chair: That sounds very reasonable. Let's prepare to do that in Thursday's meeting. We'll deal with it and solve it at Thursday's meeting.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's good.

Michel just confirmed the meeting next Monday.

The Chair: Which meeting is next Monday? I'm sorry, the board?

Mr. Michel Guimond: The Board of Internal Economy. You must advise the clerk rapidly to put it on the agenda.

The Chair: Okay, perfect. Let's do it. Can we advise the clerk of the Board of Internal Economy that a letter is coming regarding this and that we will get that letter approved on Thursday. Okay.

Colleagues, is there any other further business by members? I will remind you that at Thursday's meeting we're meeting with the elections commissioner.

Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Michel has just informed me that a special meeting is scheduled for Monday. It might be useful to know when the next regular meeting is scheduled. We don't want to wait until winter is over.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): No, the following Monday isn't a problem.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It seems to me that it's taking quite some time to find space to accommodate them.

[*English*]

The Chair: I've been hearing there's a problem. We'll get this ready for the next Board of Internal Economy's meeting, whether it's Monday next or the Monday following.

All right, I think we've solved that problem. We're going to get that letter for the next Board of Internal Economy. We'll give the secretariat a heads-up that the letter is coming so it's on their agenda.

So everybody is comfortable? No further business? Okay, we'll see you on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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