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# **Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 20, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Barry Devolin**

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## Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

• (1600)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC)):** Order.

We have three motions that we need to discuss. The first one is from Mr. Bruinooge: That the committee immediately go to a clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21 so as to delay no further the granting of access to the Human Rights Act to all aboriginal Canadians.

Mr. Bruinooge, would you like to speak to that?

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** I will. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course this is something we have been working on as a committee for a long time, and it's something that is essential for the further development of all items related to first nations people. I think it is one of the most fundamental pieces of legislation that has been brought forward in a lot of years. And of course it's something I am quite proud to have been a part of.

Perhaps before I get into full flight, there was discussion earlier today in relation to proceeding to clause-by-clause. This discussion occurred at the subcommittee. I was informed that if there was a friendly amendment to this motion to change the wording from "immediately" to "December 4", there could perhaps be some support for this. I just want at this point to see if that is the case, in order to maybe prevent further discussion at this point. I know all the members would like to talk about this item, as we have on many occasions. But should that be the sentiment of members opposite, I think we could obviously set aside long, emotional speeches on this topic at this moment in time.

Perhaps I'll just stop there and maybe poll some of the members opposite.

**The Chair:** Yes, it was Ms. Crowder who brought the idea forward this morning.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** I would propose an amendment: That the committee go to a clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21 after completing a thorough review of the supplementary estimates by December 4 so as to delay no further the granting of access to the Human Rights Act to all aboriginal Canadians.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Okay. That is a friendly amendment that would be accepted by the government side.

**The Chair:** The motion would read, "That the committee immediately go to a clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21..." Is it necessary to say "following consideration of the estimates", or can we just say "on December 4"? Oh, it's already written: "after completing a thorough review of the supplementary estimates by December 4...".

Are there any comments on this?

Monsieur Lemay.

• (1605)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** We will vote in favour of my colleague's motion, but I have a question I would like to put directly to the departmental official.

Without getting into a long speech, it is clear—and I think everyone will agree—that we have heard from many people and that we would not want to go back and have all of these discussions again from the very beginning, which is to say to go back to last year.

The position of the Bloc Québécois will be the same as that taken by the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. Shortly, that is to say at noon, they want us to vote against Bill C-21 and to do everything possible to prevent the bill from being passed or even studied clause by clause. However, I said earlier that we would not object to the study being done or to the start date of December 4 or thereabouts.

The Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada, Phil Fontaine, appeared before us. He tabled a very interesting brief that was reaffirmed by aboriginal women and by many others. In this brief, the Assembly of First Nations made four recommendations, that I do not wish to revisit at this time.

My question is for the departmental official. If these four recommendations were introduced as amendments to Bill C-21, would they be debatable and in order, which would allow us not to get caught up in days and days of debate? The parliamentary secretary was made aware of the tabling of the brief by Mr. Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations. Could these recommendations be considered debatable as draft amendments to Bill C-21?

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Of course I have seen the brief and the recommendations. These are things we have already debated and can continue to discuss during clause-by-clause. However, I believe that much of what has been suggested by the AFN will need to be incorporated into the development of policies that the Canadian Human Rights Commission will utilize to implement the various ways they will deliver access to first nations people through the transition period.

Before prorogation we committed to extending that transition period to 18 months. It's something we're still committed to doing during clause-by-clause. It is my hope that those recommendations will be incorporated into the work the Canadian Human Rights Commission does leading up to the actual date that these rights become available.

**The Chair:** I don't want to get too far into discussing this. At this point we're talking about when to schedule this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I think it is important to be in a position to focus on our deliberations. I know there is a motion on the floor that will allow us to prepare and present draft amendments by December. We all agree that we do not need to hear other witnesses, unless there are particular circumstances...

I would like to know if we can include them or if the minister will tell us that he does not want to know anything about it and that he does not want to hear anything about the possibility of discussing certain points.

•(1610)

[English]

These points are a non-derogation clause, an interpretive clause, a report section, and an adequate transition period.

[Translation]

These are the four elements that must be part of Bill C-21. In any case, we will be able to discuss the duration: will it be 6, 8, 24 or 36 months? We can discuss it, but if we do not want to know anything about the expression "transition period or interpretive clause", we will be making amendments for nothing, because they will not have the government's approval. That is my question. I just want to know if we are preparing to engage in a pointless exercise from now until December 4.

I have nothing further to add.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** This is on just that point. Mr. Lemay and I have debated this on a number of occasions. To be honest, I would prefer not to continue that debate right now, and maybe I shouldn't, but I believe there was some good testimony from a very senior aboriginal professor who suggested that non-derogation was something that was simply believed to be required within all laws in Canada: no laws in Canada can derogate. The more substantive witness testimony he provided was in relation to the interpretive clause and his feeling that legislators such as we... I know I'm not sure I myself, specifically, could ever get it right.

That was the argument that was used. I believe it is very credible to state that the experts at the Canadian Human Rights Commission would be in the best position to interpret the historic collective rights, within the implementation of this new Canadian Human Rights Commission provision, for first nations people on reserve.

**The Chair:** I have a speaking list. I have Mr. Storseth, followed by Ms. Neville, Ms. Crowder, and Ms. Karetak-Lindell.

Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I was just hoping you would read the amended motion to us so that we can hear how it would read.

**The Chair:** I'd like to clarify. It would read: "That the committee go to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21 after completing a thorough review of the supplementary estimates by December 4", and then it carries on, "so as to delay no further the granting of access to the Human Rights Act to all aboriginal Canadians".

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** So the start date would be December 4?

**The Chair:** December 4, yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Then perhaps we could include the start date.

**The Chair:** Is there a reason why we couldn't state this more simply: simply to say that the committee go to clause-by-clause on December 4, as opposed to referencing...? Is there a reason you're referencing the supplementary estimates, Ms. Crowder?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Yes, it's in case there's some bizarre reason that the minister doesn't appear on Thursday because his plane is waylaid in some frozen part of Canada and he miraculously can appear on Tuesday. That was the only reason.

I think it's important that we agree on the supplementary estimates as being a priority, because of a deadline we can't control.

**The Chair:** Is that okay?

Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I guess my point is on process.

Rather than dealing with the substantive issues related to the bill right now, I wonder whether we could just clarify the process by which we're going to deal with it. Can we get into all these debates commencing on December 4?

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Sounds fine. Hear, hear.

**The Chair:** Good idea.

Ms. Crowder, did you have anything to add?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** That was my point as well. If we're going to re-engage in the debate around the substance of the bill, fine, but if we're dealing with the motion, let's deal with the motion.

•(1615)

**The Chair:** Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Karetak-Lindell, is it the same thing?

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** That's all I was going to say.

**The Chair:** Okay. Then it sounds to me that everyone would like to move to a vote on the motion as amended. I'll read it again.

It's been moved by Ms. Crowder that the committee go to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21 after completing a thorough review of the supplementary estimates by December 4, 2007, so as to delay no further the granting of access to the Human Rights Act to all aboriginal Canadians.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The second motion was from Monsieur Lévesque.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, before the end of the last session, the Canadian government and the Quebec government were negotiating with the regional government of Nunavik with a view to concluding an agreement on regional government. One particular nation, which has always occupied the interior of the Nunavik territory and which was claiming that area, has made repeated requests. They had never had the opportunity to discuss their requests with the government. The Naskapis, who occupy part of the Nunavut territory, had asked to appear before the committee in order to state their point of view.

Given the adjournment and the prorogation of the House, their appearance was delayed, but we had agreed to reschedule it at the beginning of the session. Therefore, I ask that we hear from them at the earliest opportunity. An agreement in principle was signed, but negotiations are currently under way with respect to the final agreement. We really should therefore hear from the Naskapis before this agreement is signed, so that we will not infringe on their rights, if ever they have any.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Just before I go on to the floor, one of the things that was discussed this morning in the subcommittee in the context of the schedule was that obviously it will take a few days to organize. If these people are to come here, it's not something that can be arranged overnight. I think the date of Tuesday, December 11, was a date that was discussed this morning. In recognition that the day after tomorrow, Thursday, is probably simply not possible and that next week we are involved with the supplementary estimates and that the following week we will be starting with clause-by-clause, this was the date that was circled as the next available date, so to speak, for that meeting.

I have Ms. Crowder and then Mr. Bruinooge.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak in favour of Monsieur Lévesque's motion. As the committee members are aware, we had the Naskapi commissioners before this committee last year. One of the areas that they highlighted as an area of concern was the fact that the Naskapi people were not being appropriately considered in negotiations and in agreements that were happening. Subsequently, I know a number of us met with the Naskapi Nation, who reinforced those concerns. So I fully support Monsieur Lévesque's motion to have the Naskapi appear before the committee to give a firsthand view of what their concerns are and the impact on their territory.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, of course this is a challenging topic. However, the perspective I would bring is that Bill C-51, the former bill, which has now been reintroduced to the same point that it was previously as Bill C-11, was endorsed by all parties. I think there are a lot of people in northern Quebec who are expecting this to occur. It is our hope that there is nothing that stands in the way of that.

It would be our suggestion not to meet at this point. I know that Mr. Lévesque has brought this up a number of times. It sounds like the committee may in fact endorse his motion. Should that be the case, we would like to recommend that the Makivik Corporation also be allowed to provide some balance during this discussion.

• (1620)

**The Chair:** Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I want to make it clear that in no way does this mean that the NDP does not support that agreement and that bill. I think that's clear. And I believe the Naskapi as well have said that they agree that other people in other territories have a right to move forward with their agreements. But what they are simply asking for is a consideration of the impact on their territory. I think that the bill can proceed but we can still hear from the Naskapi.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Lévesque.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Chairman, to my knowledge, the Naskapis have produced a annual report every year since my election, that is to say for three years, asking for meetings with the government in order to settle this thorny issue. The negotiation between the two levels of government, Quebec and Ottawa, and the Makivik Corporation took place behind closed doors, that is to say that the Naskapis were not invited to present their perspective. It is simply a matter of agreements. We know that the Makivik Corporation was heard from. The government of Quebec listened to them, as did the federal government. It is simply an issue of giving a forum to the Naskapis. It is possible that no one has heard them yet.

I do not want to restart negotiations that have already taken place. I simply would like us to be aware of the Naskapis' claims. The federal government and the Quebec government are already aware of the Makivik Corporation's claims.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, I'm not sure where the Liberal Party is on this topic, but if they are in agreement, I again put forward my suggestion that we also invite the Makivik Corporation for some balance during said meeting, should it occur.

**The Chair:** Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** We would support Mr. Lévesque's motion. I don't see the need for it, but if it's the will of the committee, we would support others appearing as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge, are you putting this forward as an amendment to the motion?

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Yes, that the Makivik Corporation also be invited.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lévesque, are you willing to accept that as a friendly amendment?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** All right.

[English]

**The Chair:** *Pas de problème.* Okay.

Let me take a crack at reading the notice of motion in an amended form: That the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development should invite the leaders of the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach—

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Kawawachikamach.

[English]

**The Chair:** I live on Lake Kashagawigamog.

And that we invite representatives of the Makivik Corporation, as soon as the committee resumes sitting this fall, to explain their position on the agreement in principle—and so on and so on—among Canada, Quebec, and the Makivik Corporation regarding self-government for Nunavut Inuit versus their own land claim.

Now, do we want to identify the date in the motion as well, or can we do it in this way and kind of have an agreement that we'll try to schedule that for December 11?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** It would have to be no later than December 11.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think December 11 will be the first available meeting, so let's put that in, "on December 11".

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

•(1625)

**The Chair:** Now the third set of motions. Ms. Crowder sent us a quartet of motions.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Quartet motions.

**The Chair:** The first one is that the committee adopt the recommendations contained in the sixth report of this committee in the first session of the 39th Parliament, entitled "No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada", and report them to the House.

Did you want to speak to that, Ms. Crowder?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As the committee members are well aware, we spent a substantial amount of time studying post-secondary education and we had a very cursory response from the government. Since we tabled the report, we've had a number of other factors emerge that talk about the importance of post-secondary education. Today a number of us were in discussions with the Mining Association of Canada, where it was clear that education and training are really important factors in development of the industry. The potential workforce is first nations.

As well, over this last couple of months we've had organizations like the First Nations Technical Institute. Part of that report dealt with funding to aboriginal-controlled post-secondary education institutes. The First Nations Technical Institute has had its funding severely curtailed, and it is in danger of having programs close down. FNTI has a stellar reputation. It has done a substantial amount of work in terms of attracting and educating students and building partnerships, yet they are losing significant amounts of funding from the federal government.

Given other information that has come forward around the increasing labour shortages in Canada, it would seem that we need a call to commit resources, not only to students but aboriginal-controlled institutions.

I think it would be important for the committee to resubmit that report and to ask the government to submit a response that is reflective of all that has happened over this last several months. I am simply asking the committee to submit that sixth report back to the House and ask the government for a response.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if there are any double jeopardy laws that would be appropriate here, but this seems redundant. It has been submitted before; I'm not sure why it needs to be submitted again. I heard your reasons, but the committee has submitted this. We spent a lot of time on it. It has been done in the House previously, by our chair in the last session. I haven't been here long enough, but I haven't seen this done before, at least in my twenty or so months. I've never seen a report that has already been submitted being resubmitted.

I will defer to the committee, but I don't see this as something that needs to be done again.

**The Chair:** Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Actually, Mr. Chair, because the session was prorogued, we're actually starting fresh. In the last sitting other committees submitted reports—for example, the status of women committee submitted a report that had been considered in the previous Parliament and asked for a response. Again, I think there have been some changes that would warrant a response from the government. We still haven't had a response, for example, from Justice Berger's report in Nunavut that talked about education.

There is enough that has changed since that original government response that it would be warranted, particularly in view of the government's own throne speech around education and training. They had a different focus, so perhaps they'd like to have a different response to the report.

**The Chair:** Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Briefly, Mr. Chair, I would support Ms. Crowder's motion. There is precedent for resubmitting reports. The House has prorogued. I've been a part of committees that have resubmitted reports of previous committees.

There are a number of issues arising, some of which Ms. Crowder has mentioned, as well as the B.C. education process, which we have all been hearing concerns about.

I think there is reason to do it, and I would certainly support the motion.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Okay.

There's a difference of opinion here, but it also sounds like this is not a—

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** We're about to start a filibuster.

I'm kidding. Why don't you call the question?

**The Chair:** Can I have agreement on this, or do we need a vote?

**An hon. member:** Let's have a vote, Mr. Chair

**The Chair:** We will have a vote on Ms. Crowder's motion that the committee adopt the recommendation in the sixth report from the last session.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The second motion that came from Ms. Crowder is that the committee invite representatives from the Naskapi Nation to appear.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Chair, I am prepared to withdraw that motion.

**The Chair:** The third motion is that the committee invite the Auditor General to appear to report on the audit done on the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I'm sure committee members have had an opportunity to look at the Auditor General's very good work in chapter 3 from October. Those of us who have had an opportunity to look at it will be dismayed at some of the findings of the Auditor General. I won't go through this chapter and verse, because of course if we have agreement that the Auditor General will be coming before us, we'll have an opportunity to ask her about the details on these findings.

This report is not only symbolic of the problems with land claims implementation in Canada, but it's also a shocking display of a couple of decades' worth of neglect in terms of implementing what should be a federal government responsibility.

I think one of the reasons it would be important is that the Auditor General herself says:

The purpose of land claim agreements is to provide certainty for all parties and to clarify the rights of Aboriginal groups to lands and resources, in a manner that is intended to facilitate Aboriginal peoples' economic growth and self-sufficiency.

Throughout the report, she details a litany of government failings.

This is an all-party run at this, because it's over two decades. Various parties have been in favour, so they can all wear the blame for it. But there's some pretty strong language in here, so I would urge the committee to ask the Auditor General to come before us. Because we don't currently have anything scheduled for Thursday, if the Auditor General's department has somebody available it would allow us to actually do this in an expedited way. I'm sure the committee members would be very interested in hearing what the Auditor General has to say about this, particularly in light of some of the other land claim agreements that are going to be coming forward.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** We would support this.

**The Chair:** It sounds like there's general agreement, or wide agreement anyway, that we go ahead with this.

From a scheduling point of view, as you know, Ms. Crowder, we currently have nothing scheduled for this Thursday. That's only a day and a half away, so I guess we can't be assured that the Auditor General would be available on that day. But that request could be made tomorrow morning—or tonight, if we're out of here before 5:30.

Are there any other comments on this?

Perhaps we should add to this: “on November 22, and failing that, at the next opportunity”.

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

**The Chair:** The final motion we have to deal with today is also from Ms. Crowder: That the committee invite NWAC to appear and report on the outcomes of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit.

• (1635)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** The Native Women's Association of Canada, and perhaps some others, at the summit that was held in Newfoundland Labrador in June, I believe.... There were a number of studies and reports that were tabled at the summit, and it would seem to me that given all the work that went into the summit, it would be an opportunity for the committee—since all of us here are concerned with women's rights and women's equality—to hear from, at a minimum, the Native Women's Association of Canada about what took place at the summit and some of the recommendations.

They had representatives from a number of organizations, including Pauktuutit, Inuit Women's Association, the women of the Métis Nation, the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Assembly of First Nations, the Northwest Territories, and the National Association of Friendship Centres. So you can see there was a fairly wide cross-section of representatives who came to the summit, and they covered issues such as violence against women, the environment, culturally relevant gender-based analysis, equality and empowerment, matrimonial property, and so on. There was a huge number of topics.

Out of that summit, the women came up with some recommendations. So I think that given a number of the issues the committee has talked about in the past, whether it's education or housing—certainly we've been talking about matrimonial and real property coming before the committee at some point—it would be timely to hear from the native women of Canada around their concerns and their recommendations.

This is not simply to talk about the problems. There are some real recommendations that have come forward that we might want to consider in the work that's going to unfold over the next several months.

**The Chair:** Ms. Keeper.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** I would like to propose a friendly amendment to her motion, and that would be to perhaps hear from.... If the reason for hearing from NWAC on their summit is to hear about native women's concerns around those priority issues, I think it would serve the committee well to hear from other women's councils, including the AFN women's council and maybe MNC—the Métis National Council—and ITK. It might be a fantastic meeting, because I know in my riding we don't have a member organization for NWAC, and I have a very large riding. I have been meeting with aboriginal women all year on women's issues.

I think it would make an excellent meeting to hear from other women's councils.

**The Chair:** I'll leave that on the table. I want to get some more comments first.

Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, the government obviously would be happy to hear from NWAC on the very successful summit they had earlier this year. I had the pleasure of attending on behalf of the government, and we'd be happy to get a report. So this is something we'd support as well.

**The Chair:** Okay, great.

Ms. Karetak-Lindell.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Simply to further comment on Tina's suggestion. What used to work quite well for us in previous committees was to set up a panel so that you're hearing from different people and not only one group. Once you start getting very selective on who's going to represent the aboriginal women in Canada, then you're excluding different groups that are not necessarily maybe feeling that they're represented only by NWAC. I'm not saying anything against NWAC, but we have Pauktuutit, which is an Inuit women's association. So if we maybe set up a panel with different groups, then we could get different perspectives at the same meeting.

**The Chair:** I'm going to kick it back to Ms. Crowder in a second, but basically what I'm hearing is that this motion be slightly amended to possibly read something like, "That the committee invite NWAC and other aboriginal women's groups to appear and report." Is that too generic, or do you want to actually identify them?

• (1640)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I prefer to identify them. They would be the women's organizations that actually presented papers. That included the women of the Métis Nation, Pauktuutit, Inuit Women of Canada, the Native Women's Association of Canada, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Assembly of First Nations, the Northwest Territories have a council, and the National Association of Friendship Centres. They all presented on women's issues at the conference.

I take Ms. Karetak-Lindell's point around a panel. That's worked very well when we've done it in other committees.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, what is being suggested sounds like it would take more than one meeting. So in terms of the schedule, it is our suggestion—

You think it would take only one meeting?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Okay, so be it.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** It could be one hour for one panel, and one hour for another....

**The Chair:** Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The format is something we've utilized quite a bit in the transportation committee, when we had several groups we wanted to get through and to have some good, robust discussion. However, one thing I did find in that committee was that oftentimes it took a little bit of facilitation between the clerk and the chair to organize when all of the groups could come at a specific time.

I think Madame Crowder, Ms. Karetak-Lindell, and Ms. Keeper are absolutely right that we should try to have the maximum number of these organizations come at once and have the best discussions.

So perhaps we could leave it with the chair to try to get this list and to contact these groups to see if we can facilitate the best time. We should leave you with a little bit of leeway on that one.

**The Chair:** Right.

Just to summarize what I think I'm hearing, there's general support for the notion of bringing representatives from several groups who made presentations at the conference in June. Those were listed on the record by Ms. Crowder; I don't remember all of them off the top of my head. There's general support for setting aside one meeting; and in that meeting, depending on who is available and there, we would set up either one or two panels to create the environment for the best possible discussion.

There are two issues. One is scheduling. As of today, there are eight scheduled meetings between now and the Christmas break. Today is meeting one, which is almost over; and we're going to ask the Auditor General to be here for meeting two on Thursday. Next week, for meetings three and four, basically we'll be dealing with the estimates with staff on Tuesday and the minister on Thursday. The following week, on December 4 we would begin clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-21. At this point, we haven't specifically set something up for Thursday, December 6, but if clause-by-clause is not complete, we would continue with it on the sixth. We have discussed dealing with the Naskapi issue on the 11th, and that would take us to our last meeting on Thursday the 13th.

And there was some discussion this morning that there's always the possibility at the very end of the session that it might be cut short by a day or two. If I were betting, I would bet against that, given this has been a pretty short fall already.

So I'm not sure we can recommend a specific date for this, but that it would be as soon as possible.

Mr. Storseth.



**Mr. Brian Storseth:** We need some flexibility on that. I think we should leave it up to you, as I think you know what the wishes of the committee are, that we want to have this meeting and get it done.

Quite frankly, we could set a date right now, and if a couple of the groups can't make it, then you're going to have to come back and suggest something to us any way.

**The Chair:** I'd obviously be happy to leave it flexible. I think we understand.

Now, there's an issue with the budget. The clerk will contact these groups, to the best of her ability, and identify who will be able to make it, and will estimate the cost and bring a budget back to the committee at our next sitting on Thursday.

Is there any further discussion, or can we vote on this?

• (1645)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** We're all in favour.

**The Chair:** Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Such a reasonable person.

**The Chair:** Are we all in agreement with this motion? There's a lot of love in this room.

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

**The Chair:** That's all the business I have on my agenda.

Pardon me, there is one more issue. Over the past few weeks or months, there have been a few groups who have actually contacted the committee and requested an opportunity to appear before it.

Does everyone have this list?

**The Clerk:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The First Nations Education Council, the Pacific Peoples' Partnership, and the Songhees First Nation.

I'm obviously back in the hands of the committee. I tend to think chronologically, so we're full from now until Christmas, I think. But I don't know, when we reconvene in January, whether there's a desire to deal with this.

Just before I go to Ms. Crowder, I would note that I also think there's a reasonable chance that we will be receiving more legislation before we rise for Christmas and possibly again early in the new year, which would be our priority.

Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Chairman, I had asked that this be put on the agenda because we have received certain letters. I see that the Songhees sent us something on October 12<sup>th</sup>. In fact, you may have received the letter from the First Nations Education Council on November 7<sup>th</sup>, but I know that these people made a request in September. In the end, the House was prorogued until October 15<sup>th</sup>.

We must at least tell them something, namely that we have received their request and that we are working on the date that they could come and appear before us. I know that the First Nations Education Council wanted to be heard from us as soon as possible because the minister's office is working on the budget and that

budget includes provisions for education. We first nations are very interested in that.

We will have to see if funds are being set aside for the creation of libraries for first nations, for example. Several communities do not have the necessary funds to open a library. The department does not provide funding for libraries. I am talking about primary schools. Moreover, they have no computers in their schools. These people wanted to talk to us about of all these issues. Ms. Bastien, who represents Quebec on the First Nations Education Council has approached me several times. I presume that she or someone else has gone around to see all of the members of the committee.

Without necessarily telling these people that we will meet with them on December 13<sup>th</sup>, we could at least let them know that we have received their request and that we will try and meet with them at the beginning of January of next year.

Furthermore, I will admit that I am having trouble understanding the role of the Pacific Peoples' Partnership in all of this. With all due respect, I think that the issue here is climate change and that the challenges are more environmental in nature.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** We're all in agreement.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** As far as the treaty negotiation process is concerned, I would like to see a summary and at least be informed of what is going on.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Just—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I can take it off the table for you.

**The Chair:** Okay, Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** The Pacific Peoples' Partnership is actually an indigenous partnership between first nations in Canada and particularly the Pacific Rim first nations.

They're only going to be here for a specific period of time. So what I will be prepared to do is we'll informally set up a meeting and send it out to committee members and whoever can make it can make it. But it wouldn't be actually here at the committee, because they're only here for a very specific period of time.

So I can take that one off the table.

**The Chair:** Before we go, I've got Ms. Neville and Mr. Warkentin on the list.

The suggestion from Monsieur Lemay was that we at least send a letter to these folks saying that we received their letter and that while our agenda is full for the next few weeks, we are looking at scheduling things in the new year and that they would be considered at that time. So we're not leaving them hanging. Is that...?

• (1650)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Perfect.

Take me off of the list.

**The Chair:** All right.

Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** My concern is whether we indicate to people that we will consider them in the new year or not. We have three requests here. I've had a number of people ask me how they come before the committee. I've told them that the issues we're dealing with, first and foremost, involve legislation and that takes precedence. So I think we have to look at the whole issue of whether an individual writes to a committee. The other route is to go to a member and a member can put forward a motion that so and so, or whatever group, is invited to the committee and we can deal with it that way.

It strikes me that we have to have, if not a policy, some guidelines in terms of how we deal with requests to appear before the committee, because I think there are many out there who would like to.

**The Chair:** If I could put forward a suggestion, maybe we could discuss at a subcommittee meeting whether to have a generic response that says we've received your invitation and we'll consider it or whether to make some sort of rule that requests are only considered if they come through a committee member. There are different options for dealing with the work, rather than resolving it today.

My suggestion is that we at least...

Mr. Albrecht, did you...?

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to concur that if we acknowledge these letters and requests, that's good. But if we set aside either the legislative agenda or even a study that we feel is a priority, I think we're going to get sidetracked on many rabbit trails. We could ask for written submissions about their concerns. There are probably other ways to do it, but I am very concerned that if we just start acknowledging and accepting meetings from every group that applies for a meeting....

**The Chair:** Sure.

Go ahead, Mr. Bruinooge.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** I'll probably regret saying this, but as the legislative agenda comes before us, there may be ways to incorporate certain witnesses into the legislative study that will be occurring. So they should be kept in mind for the various studies we're going to be doing.

**The Chair:** I will take it as direction from the committee that I'll draft a generic letter that goes to people, thanks them for sending a request, and explains that we have received it and will consider it. We'll write it in such a way that it's not making a commitment to hear them. Then we'll have this discussion at the subcommittee to come up with something more specific.

In the meantime, I agree with Mr. Lemay that some of these folks wrote to us a couple of months ago, and just as a simple courtesy we probably should let them know that we have received their letters and that they are being considered. We can make a reference to the fact that there are priorities such as legislation that the committee is bound to consider. We're not making a commitment about when we're going to hear them. We'll write it in such a way that we're not making a commitment to hear them in any particular way, but we want them to know that they're on our radar screen.

Go ahead, Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I feel I must emphasize the fact that we should meet with the First Nations Education Council at one of our first meetings. These people often meet in Ottawa, giving that they come for all over the country. I feel it would be important to meet with them at the beginning of the year, especially as the minister is going to come and talk to us about his next budget. They are very important issues at stake, for example the funding of first nations primary schools, and these people wanted to come and discuss that with us.

In fact, the session is set to resume next January 28<sup>th</sup>. It would be good if we could at least tell them that the meeting will take place soon after we come back. January 28<sup>th</sup> is quite far away.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I am not disagreeing, but my preference would be that we have that discussion at the subcommittee rather than identify today that one of these has a higher priority than the others.

Is there anything else?

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** No, that's all right.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.







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