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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1720)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Order. We're back in public.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I had a motion in here, with due respect to the 48 hours' notice, to call the Minister of Foreign Affairs in front of the committee. Originally the motion was for him to come forward on the main estimates, but now, since it's been decided that the main estimates will be in the House for four hours, this motion by itself is not valid. There's no point in his coming.

However, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is very much keen on coming to talk about general policy and any other questions that any of the opposition members have. If there's interest at all, he's willing to come in front of us.

So I have drafted a motion—which, if the clerk is right, meets the 48 hours' notice—that basically calls on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to come in front of the committee to talk.

That motion, in line with Mr. Dewar's motion, which we were discussing.... The problem with Dewar's motion is that it is very narrow. It talks about only Afghanistan and confidence. Here what you have is a larger motion that allows you to talk about anything you want, which I think is the will of the committee. We have all these other parties.

In terms of your questions you've put forward here, you can still ask the same questions within your eight-minute opportunity, but the Liberals can also ask whatever they want to ask as well—

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, I understand the rationale here. What you're going to need to do, though, is make a motion to move this to the front of the pack.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm now asking you.

Is that all right with you, Mr. Dewar?

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): I think what we're debating right now is whether or not we can bring my motion forward. That's all we are debating at this point. I'd like to get that done first, and then we can discuss at that point amendments to be made so that we can meet halfway on this—so no.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, are you making a motion to advance your motion in front of everyone else's?

An hon. member: But he can't.

The Chair: We'll go to the clerk on that. The motion has been within the 48 hours thing.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): The motion that Mr. Dewar is moving—

The Chair: A little louder here.

The Clerk: I'd rather you say it, but....

The Chair: Well, you know the procedure.

The Clerk: The motion that Mr. Dewar is moving and that Mr. Obhrai wants to move are superseding motions. They don't survive from one meeting to the next. They have to be re-moved at the next meeting.

So the motion on the floor at the moment is Mr. Obhrai's motion to move his motion to the top of the list.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Which means that we can—

The Chair: You'd have to bring forward a motion in order to do that, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Paul Dewar: When we came back, I had my hand up. I thought we were continuing on from where we were at the last meeting, and my motion was on the floor. I had my hand up thinking we were going to continue on from that point. I didn't see anyone else's hand up.

The Chair: Oh, okay. I apologize, but Mr. Obhrai had already—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I don't want to take too much time on this, but to my understanding—I guess this is to the clerk, through you, Chair—we had been discussing my motion. I thought that's where we had left off. And as far as that was concerned, we were continuing on and discussing that and debating it. I had my hand up ready to continue the debate from where we had left off. Mr. Goldring had finished and we suspended at that point—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: He hadn't finished.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Then it would be Mr. Goldring continuing his comments on the debate. It wasn't about his moving another motion.

The Chair: You've heard it from the clerk: the superseding motion is not debatable when we come back into committee.

If I missed your hand, I'm sorry. Mr. Obhrai had pointed to me or given me the nod that he wanted to speak. We had talked at the last meeting that his did not have the 48 hours and that he would wait until he had the 48 hours, so I looked to Mr. Obhrai.

That said, we can definitely come right back to your motion. Mr. Obhrai has asked, and made the motion, that we move his to the front. If that's defeated, then we will come to the next individual whose motion is up.

Are we in favour of Mr. Obhrai's motion?

• (1725)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Has he moved it yet?

The Chair: Yes, he has. He has moved that his motion go to the front of the pack; I think that was the wording.

Now, if you want to discuss this, you can discuss the fact that he's asked, or—

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Can we vote on that?

The Chair: I'm asking if there are questions on moving forward Mr. Obhrai's motion. Or are you ready for the question?

All in favour of moving Mr. Obhrai's motion, which is in order, to the front, and then to debate—

An hon. member: Can you read the motion?

The Chair: I'll read it into the record.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We aren't debating the motion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, we're debating.... Actually, what you're asking is whether his motion can go into the first spot, correct?

The Chair: That's correct.

I'll read the motion that he wants moved to the front of the pack:

That pursuant to standing order 108 (2) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear in relation to main estimates at his earliest opportunity.

An hon. member: No, it's not that one.

The Chair: Oh sorry, it's number two.

Correction. The motion reads as follows:

That pursuant to standing order 108 (2) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss the foreign policy priorities of the Government of Canada.

Are you ready for the question on moving it to the front of the pack?

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Just on a point of clarification—I'm sorry to be difficult—you're withdrawing the estimates part of your motion, is that right?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes.

The Chair: Yes, because you have asked him to appear before Parliament.

Hon. Bob Rae: So you're only asking him to come here to discuss foreign policy priorities.

The Chair: Correct; he will appear in Parliament on the estimates.

We'll vote on Mr. Obhrai's motion to move his motion to the front of the pack.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right, Mr. Obhrai's motion has been read, that the minister come to discuss policy priorities of the Government of Canada.

Debate, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'd like to move an amendment to the motion: that in addition to the minister coming forward, the committee report back to the House on whether this committee has confidence in the minister, and that the committee report back to the House as soon as possible.

The Chair: Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to indicate to you my opposition to Mr. Dewar's motion, and I'll tell you why. I'm not interested in seeing this committee get paralyzed by a procedural matter. We know very well that we could use our majority in the committee to vote non-confidence in the minister. We also know what the impact of that would be on the business of the committee and the business of the House. I'm not interested in doing that.

I've indicated my views about the minister. I think everybody knows what they are. I'm just not interested in completely paralyzing this committee to achieve that objective.

So I'm going to oppose Mr. Dewar's motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rae.

Mr. Obhrai—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, just to clarify, we have an amendment in front of us.

The Chair: Yes, and we're discussing the amendment portion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I agree with the Liberals that there are a lot of other issues that need to go forward. There are a lot of other places where—

The Chair: Am I wrong in suggesting that you oppose his amendment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Just let me finish.

There are a lot of other areas where you can express your vote of confidence. Let's get the business going.

Mr. Chair, I would call for the question.

The Chair: We'll vote on Mr. Dewar's amendment.

(Amendment negated)

• (1730)

The Chair: Now we will call the question on Mr. Obhrai's motion.

An hon. member: I'm sorry, the committee is done. It's 5:30.

The Chair: Is it 5:30?

This meeting is done only when the gavel comes down, except when there's a vote. When there's a vote, it immediately dies.

We'll call the question on Mr. Obhrai's motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Seeing the clock at 5:29, we will adjourn.

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