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Chair

The Honourable Shawn Murphy

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)): I would like to call the meeting to order.

Bienvenue.

The first item of business today is to deal with the report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Once that is dealt with, we are going to go in camera to deal with a couple of reports.

The first item is the minutes of the steering committee that was held Thursday of this week. Attached to those minutes you will see a schedule that takes us through the next couple of weeks, the working plan of this committee.

I'll perhaps elaborate on the minutes briefly. The first item is the committee decided that if possible we would try, depending on how we get along, to bring forward some of the chapters we had heard testimony on but didn't write a report for. We have draft reports, and we're going to take a stab at this and perhaps start at the next draft meeting and see how we get along, depending on the workload of the committee.

That's not to be confused with the five reports that were done, completed, and tabled in the House of Commons during the 39th Parliament. We passed a motion that those reports would be re-tabled for the sole purpose of inviting a government response within the required 120 days. That was done yesterday. Those reports were tabled, and now the time starts, the 120 days, and we'll get a report from the government at that point in time.

Secondly, colleagues, as you recall, there was some debate at one of the previous meetings as to whether or not this committee would actually have a hearing on chapter 4, "Managing Risks to Canada's Plant Resources—Canadian Food Inspection Agency". That was discussed at the steering committee, and the basic decision was made to table that until after we received the March 2009 report of the Auditor General just to see how we're getting along.

The third item is the committee schedule of meetings for April. The first one is to consider the March 2009 report of the Auditor General. And I should point out to committee members that on Tuesday, March 31, the Auditor General will be tabling her March report, which has five or six chapters, and it has also reference to about eight or nine special examinations of crown corporations or agencies. That would be a standard meeting that this committee would have immediately following the tabling of the auditor's report.

Also some time during the month of April we would have a meeting, and this is another meeting that we have every year, to consider the main estimates of the Office of the Auditor General. The only estimates this committee deals with are the estimates emanating from the Office of the Auditor General, and at that same time we would deal with her office's departmental performance reports and the reports on plans and priorities for the upcoming year.

Thirdly, the steering committee is recommending that at some time in April we have a general meeting, which should be beneficial and informational, inviting the Auditor General, the Secretary of the Treasury Board, and the Comptroller General of Canada to have a discussion as to the whole issue of accounting and reporting in Canada for the assistance of this committee.

Item four, colleagues, is to revisit or reinstitute the follow-up work that was being done by Jack Stilborn during the last Parliament. This is the follow-up work that we were doing, following up not only the recommendations of the Auditor General but the recommendations of this committee.

• (1535)

We have found in the past, on some occasions, that recommendations would be made, and the department or agency would agree with the recommendations. But 24 months later, we would find that there really hadn't been a lot done. We wanted to institutionalize some of the follow-up so that the departments and agencies would know that they were being followed and that there was follow-up being done. We actually did, in the 39th Parliament, file a fairly lengthy report in Parliament just setting out the follow-up and the work that was done by these various departments and agencies.

The last item is that the steering committee is recommending that the clerk be authorized to purchase from the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation *Parliamentary Oversight — Committees and Relationships — A Guide to Strengthening Public Accounts Committees*. It's a very helpful document, which certainly explains the roles and duties of members of the public accounts committee, not only in Canada but in all Commonwealth countries.

That is just a summary of the minutes from the steering committee.

Is there any comment or follow-up?

The chair would entertain a motion to adopt the minutes as circulated.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): I so move.

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

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

The Chair: I'm going to adjourn this part of the meeting, and then I'm going to ask that the meeting reconvene in camera so that we can start considering two reports from the committee.

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