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Chair: Mr. Sean Casey





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Tuesday, November 22, 2022

• (1255)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)):** The meeting is in session and in public.

Mr. Liepert, thank you for agreeing to delay the move to go in public so that we only had to change over once.

You have the floor.

**Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of Dr. Ellis, I want to move the motion:

That for the next twelve months Health Canada table with the committee on a weekly basis the number of infant and children's acetaminophen and ibuprofen doses that arrived in Canada that week, the number of doses anticipated to arrive the following week; and, that this information be provided in both official languages, and the clerk post this information on the committee's website immediately

**The Chair:** The motion is in order.

Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have an amendment. Should I do that now?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** My amendment, which has been sent to everyone in the room in English is:

That, for the next six months Health Canada table with the committee on a monthly basis the number of infant and children's analgesic units that arrived in Canada through exceptional importations that month; and, that this information be provided in both official languages, and the clerk post this information on the committee's website immediately.

**The Chair:** The amendment is in order.

I recognize Mrs. Goodridge.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that the member from the Liberals, Mr. van Koeverden, is trying to work with us to put this forward. I think there are some good suggestions here, specifically in clarifying some of the language around the “analgesic units” rather than “acetaminophen and ibuprofen doses” and perhaps looking at it just as the units that are brought into Canada through the “exceptional importations”.

I believe that going to monthly reporting rather than weekly kind of defeats the purpose of the transparency. Parents are panicked

right now. Kids are struggling and information is a good way of combatting the fear.

I would strongly recommend to everyone in this committee to keep in mind the parents who are panicking right now, who are worried for the health and safety of their children and who want information. Waiting monthly to get this information when we've already been waiting six months for the government to do anything is not going to make parents happy.

I would suggest that weekly would be a much better way. I would propose a subamendment to change “monthly” back to “weekly”.

**The Chair:** The subamendment is in order.

Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Mr. van Koeverden's amendment is fair at the start. For the next twelve months... I think probably six months makes sense from that perspective. I certainly agree with that part of his amendment, but as we get into the rest of his amendment, I think it kind of takes away some of that urgency that we're seeing.

If we can keep the first few words of his amendment, that's perfect. I think the rest of it is what we're struggling with because that information piece right now is key to so many parents out there.

**The Chair:** Mr. van Koeverden, do you have an intervention?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the comments on it.

Just to ensure we're clear, as Madam Goodridge is aware... She implied that nothing has been done for the last six months, which isn't correct. The website is now up and tracking all of the importations, exceptional and otherwise, including many bulk shipments that the federal government has been able to secure from foreign suppliers.

This is not the first thing that the federal government has done to remedy this situation—not by any stretch of the imagination. I think we're all aware of that. We had a meeting on it with officials as well as people who came with vast expertise on the supply chain.

I feel it's incumbent upon me to point out the fact that the federal government has been at the table and engaged with suppliers, manufacturers as well as distributors since the onset of this unfortunate shortage and that the record indicate that because this has been a very challenging situation for parents. As my colleague pointed out, information—and the correct information—is a good remedy for some of that anxiety that is very prevalent right now through our communities. We don't want any misinformation.

The amendment, I believe, stands. The monthly updates will provide more cogent information, just as much information and people will not be waiting. In fact, people will get more information in the first week rather than having to wait until the fourth week to get that information.

I'm confident that this is the best solution for conveying all that pertinent information to parents, families and caregivers.

**The Chair:** Mr. Doherty.

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our colleagues.

I would suggest to Mr. van Koeverden that perhaps in the absence of information, misinformation fills the void.

Moving to what Mr. Jeneroux said, I think that for the first part of Mr. van Koeverden's amendment, for the next six months, we move to weekly reports regarding amounts of children's analgesics ordered, secured and delivered. I think that provides the Government of Canada with a great opportunity to showcase all the work it's doing and all its efforts.

The lag time from a week to a month allows that misinformation to fill the void. What better way for the Government of Canada to show that it is truly working and doing its part than to move this to a weekly update on what it's doing to combat this situation we're in? The media are watching and Canadians are watching. Perhaps more reporting on a more timely basis allows the Government of Canada to demonstrate to Canadians that it is working on it.

As I said earlier on in my intervention, in the absence of good information, misinformation will always fill the void. I think this is a great way for the Government of Canada to show that it is doing its part.

Thanks.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** The speakers list is exhausted.

Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you.

First of all, before I make my remarks, can I be clear on what the motion before us right now is? Can you read out the motion as amended and subamended?

**The Chair:** Sure. We have a motion presented by Mr. Liepert that had first been put on notice on November 15.

The proposed amendment put forward by Mr. van Koeverden would result in the motion reading as follows:

That, for the next six months Health Canada table with the committee on a monthly basis the number of infant and children's analgesic units that arrived in

Canada through exceptional importations that month; and, that this information be provided in both official languages, and the clerk post this information on the committee's website immediately

We also have a subamendment to change the word “monthly” in Mr. van Koeverden's amendment to “weekly”.

We will vote first on the subamendment, when we vote.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I'll keep my remarks short.

I think I've been clear that our position is that Canadians do have a right to know the number of units that are coming in. Somehow or other we've arrived at a situation where we have an extreme shortage. I think I might not be exaggerating by saying there's a dangerous shortage of children's analgesic medication.

We have to always take the opportunity to point out that unfortunately this is not a unique incident. We heard that hundreds of drugs are listed on a shortage list every year in this country. I think it's a good warning to us that we'd better start trying to understand the structural causes of why Canadians are faced with dangerous shortages of medication. Whether it's pediatric analgesics or EpiPens, or vaccines or anaesthesia or oncology drugs, we know we have a problem in this country with supply chains and overreliance on foreign suppliers.

What I would say is this—and maybe it's the middle child in me here—I'm wondering if there's a compromise at biweekly. The reason is that I'm not sure what weekly numbers will tell Canadians. If we find out there are 310,412 units coming next week, and the week after we're having 270,504, I'm not sure anybody—I know I don't—has any basis for taking any meaning from that.

What I would notice is the pattern, though, but even a pattern can be concerning. So if the point of this is to reassure Canadian, then I think if we have a weekly report, that almost may have the unintended consequence of making people nervous, thinking, what happened so that we have less this week than last week? I think what Canadians want to see is they want to see their government is acting, they want to see we have exceptional efforts being put in place, we want to make sure the problem is being addressed and we want to see progress.

With great respect to my Liberal colleagues, it can't just be a “trust us”. I think what we want to see is we want to see what the numbers are. Frankly, I don't hear any resistance from the Liberals, and I appreciate they put the motion to disclose that information.

I think what we have to do is we have to come up with what's a reasonable time period that can reassure Canadians that progress is being made, we can yet hold the government to account and make sure the numbers are published. To me, for some reason, "weekly" seems like it may be too frequent and maybe won't even necessarily accomplish what we want. "Monthly", I think, seems almost a little bit too long, although it also would address the issue.

I'm just wondering. I don't think there can be a subamendment to a subamendment.

**A voice:** There can.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Can there? Let me change it to friendly.

**A voice:** Yes.

**Mr. Don Davies:** But anyway, I'll tell you that I will be voting against "weekly" and proposing "biweekly" as a good compromise.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies. And your gut was correct.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Unless people are okay with that.

**The Chair:** We have to dispose of this subamendment, then you're free to bring another one. But we can't deal with two at the same time.

Mr. Doherty, I see your hand up. Did you wish to intervene or is it up from the last time?

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Chair, if I can, I have no problem with changing my amendment—that's what we're working off—to "biweekly". I will agree with Mr. Davies that the information we heard was there were over 800 medicines that we are lacking in, 22 of them were of a very serious nature. Again, we don't want to cause panic, but we do want to show the government is doing what they say they're doing.

With that—I have no problem, again, I'll defer to my colleagues who are around the table there—to make a change to "biweekly", if I can amend my own amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Ms. Goodridge, please.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Considering it was my subamendment, I believe I have the ability to amend a subamendment that I made. So I'm going to pull my subamendment and create a new subamendment, and pull "weekly" and put "biweekly", so every two weeks.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just procedurally—

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** I am removing—

**The Chair:** —in order to withdraw your subamendment, you will require unanimous consent. I don't think there will be any problem to get it.

Do we all agree that Ms. Goodridge can withdraw her subamendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Subamendment withdrawn)

**The Chair:** Okay. So the subamendment is withdrawn, and now you wish to put another subamendment on.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Yes.

I would like to subamend it to "biweekly", meaning every two weeks.

**The Chair:** Very good. We got there. That's in order.

Yes, Mr. Liepert.

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Just for clarification, Wikipedia describes "biweekly" as either twice in a week or every other week.

So if we change it to biweekly, we are not necessarily making it very clear.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Okay. Make it "every 14 days".

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Good.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I think we have consensus to use "every 14 days" as the subamendment.

Are we now ready for the question?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The question is on the subamendment that the amendments put forward by Mr. van Koeverden be changed such that the tabling of the information in question will happen every 14 days.

Is it the will of the committee to adopt the subamendment?

I see consensus.

(Subamendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** We're now on the amendments by Mr. van Koeverden to the main motion. You have them in front of you.

Are we in favour of the amendment proposed by Mr. van Koeverden? Is it the will of the committee to adopt that amendment?

I see consensus.

(Amendment as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion as amended and subamended?

Yes, Ms. Goodridge.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** I just want to thank all members for supporting this idea and allowing this to come forward. I think this is so important. I've talked to hundreds of Canadian parents all across the country, and this has been a real concern. They want to see progress. They want information so that they're not in the black-hole void of social media.

I'd like to thank all members from all parties for listening to this mom, realizing that this is a serious concern, and bringing this forward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Can we get a recorded vote?

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, please proceed with a recorded vote on the motion as amended and subamended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

It is not.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Just quickly, can I get a show of hands indicating support to have both ministers appear for one hour at the same time on Tuesday so that we can do supplementary estimates as we discussed? It's one hour for both and then we can also do a private member's bill on Tuesday.

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**An hon. member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thumbs-up...?

**The Chair:** Okay—

**Mr. Don Davies:** I'd rather have officials for the second hour.

**The Chair:** What's happening here? I feel like I'm....

Mr. van Koeverden has proposed that we do an examination of supplementary estimates (B) on the 29th with two ministers.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** We'd have ministers in the first hour and officials in the second.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Do we have consensus on that?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

Is there any discussion?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** Mr. Doherty has his hand up.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** I have no problem with what Mr. van Koeverden has proposed. Again, I'll leave it to the will of those around the table.

I do have a question. Mr. van Koeverden mentioned that Health Canada has posted the information as to the current situation regarding children's health and analgesics. It's not up there. There's only an acknowledgement that there is an issue—not the amount that is coming in or what has been requested. It's not on the Health Canada website. Perhaps he has information on where it is, but we can't seem to find it.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we have consensus that on the 29th the ministers will be appearing on estimates for the first hour, with officials for the second hour.

I see heads nodding. We have a consensus. Thank you.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thanks, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

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