



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

---

PACP • NUMBER 013 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, February 10, 2014**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. David Christopherson**



## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Monday, February 10, 2014

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP)):** I now declare this 13th meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in order.

Colleagues, the first order of business is committee business. We have a number of items—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** —to deal with, and I will recognize Mr. Woodworth.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to take the opportunity on a point of order at our first public meeting since the election of our officers to raise an issue for clarification at future meetings regarding the manner in which the vote occurred for the position of chair of this committee.

As you will recall, when the roll call was being announced, and my name was inquired about, I indicated an abstention. My intention in saying “abstention” was that I wished to abstain from voting for that particular issue on the floor.

The clerk who was conducting the vote responded with I think—and I don't want to put too much supposition into this—the idea she was focused on how to record the results of the vote. She indicated an abstention was not permitted, and that there must be a yea or a nay. I believe from conversations with the clerk her intention was to say an abstention would not be recorded, but only a yea or a nay would be recorded. What she said I think was one could not abstain, but one must vote yea or nay.

Faced with that choice and what I regarded to be a ruling from the individual who was conducting the ballot, I then voted in the negative.

The first point I wanted to put on the record for the purpose of future meetings and votes, having checked and having had some discussion with the clerk, is that it is in fact the case that one may abstain from a vote for the office of an officer of a committee. If one does so, one's abstention will simply not be recorded in a recorded vote. Only those who vote yea or nay will be recorded, but there is nothing to prevent an individual from abstaining from issuing a vote.

The second thing I should mention is that I've received the blues of that meeting, and the exchange I had with the clerk in that regard is not recorded in the transcript. So first of all, I hope I'm accurately reflecting what the exchange was. It's certainly as I remember it, but I will be asking for the transcript to be made complete with that

exchange in it. I know my vote cannot be changed at this point, and I know if I had thought I could abstain, it would have simply not been recorded at all, but I would like the transcript to reflect the fact that my intention was not to cast a vote. Only after being confronted with what seemed to be a choice between yea or nay did I cast a ballot.

I will be asking whoever is in charge of the blues to include that in the transcript, as it was said at the meeting. If any support is required from the clerk on that, I hope it will be forthcoming.

My main point in this point of order is just to make it certain that for future reference, if we are ever in that position again, it is clear a member has the right to abstain from voting. Simply in that case they will not be mentioned in a recorded vote. I hope that's a correct understanding. If it's not I wish to hear so now, and if it is I hope all others will profit from my experience.

Thank you.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Good.

Now let's resolve this matter. Madam Clerk, do you have something to contribute to this discussion please?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Joann Garbig):** Yes. My apologies to the honourable member.

My intention was to convey that only a yea or nay can be recorded in a recorded vote. No member is compelled to vote and so a member not wishing to partake in the vote is, of course, free to do that. If the member has some input to offer or requests to make with respect to the transcript, I'd be happy to take that and forward it to the directorate responsible.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Also by virtue of your raising this as you did now in the public session, your comments, thoughts, and position are captured by the *Hansard* of today.

So I'm hoping that you consider yourself to have been made whole, if you will, in terms of the issue.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** I would like the transcript of the event to be made whole also.

**The Chair:** The clerk referenced what she would do in that regard.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Sure.

**The Chair:** I was just picking up on your last point that you wanted your position to be publicly known. By doing this now it's in the public record, you've achieved that part of it.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** So both pieces of your concerns, as far as I can see, look to have been addressed. Is that fair?

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** No. Only when the transcript accurately records what was said will everything be redressed.

But I don't think that will be an issue. The clerk has indicated she will assist with that.

**The Chair:** Fair enough.

If I may also, on a housekeeping matter, because I would like it on the public record.... We've lost some of our members, as you recall, because of the shrinking of the committee membership. Messieurs Shipley, Adler, and Harris have left and I thank them for their contribution. They were excellent members of this committee, and I would now welcome Mr. Falk, who has those shoes to fill. I know Ted from a previous public accounts conference and I know his interest in this.

I'm very pleased to see you as a contributing player on this committee, Ted, so welcome and I wish you all the best.

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Now colleagues, as I see it, there are a number of matters before we get to the actual draft report that we were going to consider. These are not in any particular order, but we did have a hearing scheduled in December and then it didn't happen because the House rose, so that is there to be dealt with, one way or another.

The public accounts report, the draft report, has been sent to you. Everybody should have that, and we're ready to do that today when we've finished business. We had a hearing on chapter 5, "Preventing Illegal Entry into Canada". I want to advise members that a draft report is ready. All we need to do is give the go-ahead to circulate it and then of course schedule the time to deal with it.

Notices of motions are there for members to raise or not. We have the outstanding matter of the spring report, where we had four chapters chosen. We've had one hour on one of the chapters. We still have another hour on that and we still have the other three.

Also you should have in front of you a letter that came into the clerk's office. My reading of it, colleagues, is that this is the sort of thing that we would send to the Auditor General, with or without comment. Normally it would be without, unless there are particular directions or thoughts or comments we want to give. This might be the easiest one to deal with. Could I maybe put this in front of you and ask for a motion to refer it to the Auditor General for his consideration?

Mr. Albas.

• (1540)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Certainly I don't mind coming to a decision, but maybe we can push this back to the next meeting and then we can give some direction because I'd like to look into this a little further before making a final decision.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Referral is probably the best step, but again, I don't want to prejudice that without giving it enough thought.

**The Chair:** Fair enough. You just got it in front of you now. Was it circulated before? A lot of paper comes at us.

I hear you. Let me ask the clerk one question about timeliness. Is there anything at all in here that would negate our ability to defer it one meeting, time-wise?

**The Clerk:** I didn't see anything.

**The Chair:** I didn't either, but I wanted to be sure.

No problem. Is there agreement? We'll defer this to the next business meeting.

Okay, good. So colleagues, you have the issues as I see them. There may be others that you wish to add, but I will be seeking some guidance on this. Then when we've concluded that part of it, we'll start working on the draft.

The floor is open.

Mr. Albas.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move to go in camera.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have a motion to go in camera.

It's in order and non-debatable.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I'll suspend for a couple of moments while we set the technology.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>