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Chair

The Honourable Wayne Easter

Standing Committee on Finance

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. We are continuing clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-15.

(On clause 212)

The Chair: The amendment that will be coming forward is NDP-13.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): That is correct. I already discussed amendment NDP-12, at the same time as NDP-11.

In fact, the three amendments concern the same clause. We know that in the bill the amendments to employment insurance allow for a five-week benefit extension for the 12 regions selected by the government. The criterion for choosing these 12 regions is arbitrary, to say the least: there has to have been a two-point increase in the unemployment rate over a three-month period, without any indication of an economic upturn.

I was surprised by the minister's answer, yesterday, when we asked about this. Three other regions have already been added to the list. Four other regions may become eligible within a month, but no other regions are to be added to the list of those that may benefit from an extension of benefits. This adds to the arbitrary nature of the government's decision, I think.

I am going to discuss one amendment at a time, since they have to be considered separately, even though all three concern the same clause.

Amendment NDP-13 seeks to have all regions included. It eliminates discrimination regarding all Quebec and Canadian regions. So the number of regions would no longer be limited to 12. The entire country could benefit from this measure. We propose that everyone have access to the extension of benefits, no matter where they live.

[English]

The Chair: I think, as you know, this would impose an additional charge on the public treasury, and therefore I have to rule it inadmissible.

I will read, because we're in a new meeting, the relevant section of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, where it states on pages 767 and 768:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

This amendment would increase the number of eligible claimants, which would impose an additional charge on the public treasury, and therefore I would rule it inadmissible.

On amendment BQ-7.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I've only spoken to one of my amendments. The three are different. I was going to move to the second one if the first one was defeated.

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair: The amendment BQ-7 comes before, so that's why, Mr. Caron.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: You are right. I'm sorry.

[English]

The Chair: We'll come back to amendments NDP-14 and NDP-15.

Amendment BQ-7 is being moved by Mr. Marciel.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Amendment BQ-7 seeks to increase the number of regions, to open up the list of regions in the bill. The regions are all oil-producing regions, unfortunately. The problem is that the entire resource sector is experiencing a downturn, including the mines in Abitibi. The situation is no better on the North Shore. From what we can see, that is not the only economic sector that is not doing well. Given the energy the government is putting into killing the aircraft industry in Quebec, things may get very difficult indeed, including in my own riding.

The amendment proposes that we eliminate the list, which is closed, and that we add regions as need be. The regions that are on the list are all outside of Quebec.

[English]

The Chair: Basically, it's quite close to the same ruling that applies to amendment NDP-13.

Amendment BQ-7 would grant the minister the power to extend the number of regions, and in my opinion the amendment diverges from the current conditions of the royal recommendation in a way that could increase the number of eligible claimants, which would impose an additional charge on the public treasury. Therefore, I would rule that the amendment is inadmissible.

On amendment NDP-14.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I've often mentioned, the five-week benefit extension was made available as part of what was called a pilot project. This project was abolished by the Conservatives in 2011, if I'm not mistaken, or 2012. The measure was available in regions where the economy was largely dependent on seasonal jobs.

The purpose of the amendment is to add regions that used to benefit from this pilot project to the 12 regions proposed by the government. These are the regions concerned: Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, central Quebec, Trois-Rivières, northwestern Quebec, the Lower Saint Lawrence and North Shore, the region of Chicoutimi—Jonquière, the regions of eastern Nova Scotia and western Nova Scotia, Madawaska—Charlotte, Restigouche—Albert, the regions of southern interior British Columbia and southern coastal British Columbia, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, St. John's, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would reject the amendment basically under the same rules, but a little differently. Amendment NDP-14 attempts to extend the number of regions, and so in the opinion of the chair the amendment would increase the number of eligible claimants, which would impose an additional charge upon the public treasury. Therefore, this amendment is inadmissible.

NDP-15.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: I don't believe you can find that one out of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's always good to try, Mr. Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Since my two previous efforts failed, I'm going to make a third attempt.

If we go strictly by the definition issued by the government as to eligibility for the employment insurance benefit five-week extension, three new regions of the country are now eligible. These are the southern interior British Columbia region, southern Saskatchewan and the Edmonton region.

In this regard, I would like to point out that the Prime Minister himself publicly announced on May 13 that these three regions would be covered by the provisions on this extension of employment insurance benefits. It is the government's wish, and here we have the bill that could put it into effect. Our proposal is to add these three regions to the 12 already covered by the provisions in the bill.

[*English*]

The Chair: The same ruling applies, Mr. Caron. You are adding regions, so it is likely going to impose an additional charge upon the public treasury, and I know you wouldn't want that, so I would have to rule that the amendment is inadmissible.

Go ahead.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: The government has already announced that it is going to do so. If it is the government's will and it has already been announced, how will these three regions be covered if the bill we are going to adopt is not amended? I think that is quite a legitimate question at this point.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there officials here who can answer that question? A cabinet decision is a matter different from a piece of legislation. As the minister announced last night, they are bringing in three additional regions where the 2% increase in unemployment over three months exists.

Mr. Liepert wants in.

In terms of this committee, the royal recommendation only relates to the bill in question. The matter you raised is something that certainly can be raised with the minister.

They're having a discussion at the back of the room. We'll see whether we can get some officials, but Mr. Liepert will continue in the meantime.

Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): This is just a general comment to follow upon what Mr. Caron is proposing. It is frustrating for a member of Parliament on this committee, which is supposed to be doing due diligence on a bill, that the Prime Minister can go out on his own and make an announcement that effectively changes the bill that we haven't even gotten through committee yet. I don't understand, first of all, why in this particular bill we are being region-specific and why those terms aren't part of regulations rather than of the bill.

Then we have things being changed on the fly, as I say, before the committee has even had a chance to go through the bill. Frankly, it almost makes a sham of the process, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Caron, Mr. Champagne, do you have anything to add?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): I'll listen to Mr. Caron first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: My question was real and honest, and I would like to obtain a reply.

Why does the bill specify 12 regions? The government announced that three regions would become eligible under the criteria it developed, but it did not add these three regions to the bill.

I don't understand. I would like a public servant to come and answer that question.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Champagne, do you have anything you can add or can any officials add to this?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: We can have an official provide the answer to that, to testify about the process and the royal recommendation that needs to come first before that can be amended. They will provide a technical answer. It's a technical issue, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Ryan, I believe, director general, employment insurance policy, skills and employment branch, have you heard the discussion?

Ms. Annette Ryan (Director General, Employment Insurance Policy, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): I have, sir.

[Translation]

This change requires a royal recommendation,

[English]

which we do not yet have. Until that has been established, that's the timing issue that would prevent it from being considered now. It's somewhat of a parliamentary issue as much as a substantive policy issue, but that would be the sequence that is missing at this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: I would like to ask the same question Mr. Liepert asked, which is entirely relevant.

Why specify the regions in the bill, if the criteria that determine which regions will be eligible mean that from one month to the next, new regions could become eligible and we will constantly have to amend the law?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Champagne.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary, I would like the official to answer this question first.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: It's a political question, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Guy Caron: No, no. My question is simple: why have included that in the bill rather than in regulations, since the regions determined according to criteria established by the government run the risk of changing constantly? Why is this being done through a bill rather than through regulations?

• (1545)

[English]

The Chair: Madam Ryan.

Ms. Annette Ryan: This would be related to the discussion yesterday of the structure of the policy, which starts benefit access in January of 2015 on a reach-back basis, in which case the further we move from that base period makes the policy intent much less applicable to this policy measure.

The second issue discussed yesterday was the definition of "sudden" being based in the reference period of December 2014 to February 2015. This is part of the definition that becomes less pertinent the further we go in time from that base period. There is a commitment to continue to study how this measure plays forward to inform permanent changes to the program, as you may be suggesting. This particular definition has both a policy rationale that's structured around that time period as well as the definition of "sudden" that reflects that.

The Chair: Mr. Caron, I don't want to go down this road too far. I have ruled based on the legislation that this does require a royal recommendation. It does go somewhat to your point as to whether these measures should be part of a budget bill or a separate bill; I will grant you that.

We'll take a couple of more comments, but we've already ruled.

Go ahead and ask your question, as Mr. Liepert wants in.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: I have one last question.

If the government intends to add the southern interior British Columbia region, southern Saskatchewan and the Edmonton region, as had already been announced, another bill might become necessary to amend what we are currently amending through the budget implementation bill.

The bill establishes the 12 regions, and the intent is to add three. And so the bill we are studying now will have to be amended to add those three regions. Am I mistaken?

[English]

The Chair: Could I ask a question that might clarify this?

In the new regions that have come in, have they hit the 2% threshold? Isn't the criterion in this bill that if you have an increase of 2% in unemployment over a three-month period, then that brings the region in? Am I wrong or correct on that?

Mr. Champagne.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: I said "indeed".

The Chair: Oh, "indeed". Okay.

Ms. Ryan.

Ms. Annette Ryan: You're right, Mr. Chair. That is the criterion by which the list is selected; but the structure of the legislation is to name the listed regions, as we have done in the past with any number of pilot projects that provided benefits on a regional basis. That has an administrative logic as well as the policy intent logic of basing the list of regions in the time that lines up with the commodity decline.

The Chair: Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I just want to get a little clarification on past budgets. Would it have been common practice in past budgets to actually name regions, or would the budget have contained the criteria, and as the chair said, so that if you fell under or met those criteria, then you would qualify? Has it been past practice to specifically name regions, or is this something that is new to this budget?

The Chair: Ms. Ryan.

Ms. Annette Ryan: It's a bit of a complex answer to your question.

There is a well-established practice within the employment insurance program to introduce policy changes via pilot projects that follow a list of named regions. This has been the case in the past with any number of measures. We call them regional pilots. This authority still exists within the EI Act and regulations.

The difficulty of using that power in this case is that essentially we cannot provide benefits retroactively or, more specifically, retrospectively via regulations. That's a legislative power that we have to follow if we in fact want to have benefits in a timing that coincides with the labour market implications of the commodity's downturn. Essentially, if we wanted to go back and help people who started to be affected as of January 2015, we'd need to do it via legislation rather than regulation.

• (1550)

Mr. Ron Liepert: Would you admit that you could have done it by criteria in the legislation and not have been region-specific?

Ms. Annette Ryan: That would be a very different policy mechanism that would be difficult to implement for our administrative folks. The amount of systems changes and operational changes involved are really quite considerable. That's been one of the core principles of why lists are typically preferred in these approaches rather than a moving trigger, which is built into our program through the variable entrance requirements but requires a very deep and profound approach administratively so that you have quite a large system that adjusts in real time. That's beyond the policy intent of a response to this specific downturn.

The Chair: One more comment, and then we have to move on, Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Right. I just want to get clarity.

Right now we are talking about the particular clause, because you rejected the amendment. We are in a situation of having to vote for or against a clause that we know is wrong, in practice, because we've been told that we are otherwise going to add regions to it. We're being asked to vote on a clause that the government has already publicly said is outdated.

The Chair: Do you have a comment, Mr. Champagne?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: I would just say, Mr. Chair, that you've drawn the motion, and we've provided feedback and explanation. I think everything that has to be said has been said on this.

The Chair: This is going to be the final comment because we are into a debate, but I think it's a good discussion.

Mr. Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: I agree with you: it's a good discussion. Ms. Ryan gave us information and we appreciate that, but it doesn't solve the issue. Mr. Liepert is right.

Right now we have to approve a clause that is now incomplete because of the government's own wishes. The government no longer intends to have 12 regions, but 15. However, the bill forces us to take a position on a list that contains only 12 regions. I think this will add

to the confusion around this clause regarding the five-week benefit extension. And this adds to the arbitrary nature of the government's decision.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Ryan, did you have a point?

Ms. Annette Ryan: It comes back to the sequence of an amendment requiring a royal recommendation. There isn't one at this time, so the staging doesn't follow that sequence.

Mr. Guy Caron: Weren't you talking about the clause, now that the amendment has been ruled out of order? The clause itself isn't complete now.

The Chair: Mr. Liepert, did you have anything further to say?

Mr. Ron Liepert: You could reconsider the amendment.

The Chair: It doesn't meet the royal recommendation; that's the reality.

Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

Shall clause 212 carry?

Do you want a recorded vote or are you on division?

Mr. Guy Caron: I want a recorded vote.

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote on whether clause 212 carries unamended.

(Clause 212 agreed to: yeas 6; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 213 agreed to on division)

The Chair: There's an amendment, BQ-8.

Mr. Marcil, go ahead.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon Marcil: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The purpose of amendment BQ-8 is to change the employment insurance benefit rate from 55% to 60% of insurable earnings, so that unemployed people are able to meet their basic needs.

I think we all understand that people who are receiving employment insurance benefits do not necessarily use the money to buy 70-inch televisions. No, they use it to pay their rent, to heat their homes, to feed their children. In fact, 55% of your income, especially if it is not high, is not very much money. It is difficult to make ends meet. These are the reasons we are moving amendment BQ-8.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would rule this amendment out of order. BQ-8 is similar to many of the others in this section, as it seeks to increase benefits set out in section 14 of the Employment Insurance Act. I'll not read the relevant paragraph of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, but it's inadmissible because the amendment would impose a charge on the public treasury. Therefore, it's out of order and I rule it inadmissible.

Next is amendment BQ-9 to the same clause 213.1.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon Marcil: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We must never forget that it is the workers and employers who contribute to the employment insurance fund, and not the crown or the government. There really are no additional costs, since the government does not pay for this.

Amendment BQ-9 proposes that we use the 12 best-paid weeks of work to determine the benefit rate for an employment insurance recipient, rather than using the 12 last weeks. That would protect an employee who has sacrificed some of his or her work conditions to keep his plant open, who has sacrificed some of his salary and benefits. This way, if ever the plant were to close, we would avoid the employees being penalized by the fact that their last 12 weeks of compensation are being taken into account, when their salary was reduced to attempt to save the business. We want to avoid doubly penalizing someone who tried to save his job, but winds up losing it in any case. It would really be much more beneficial to the workers if we took their 12 best weeks into account.

May I remind everyone that the government does not put one cent into the employment insurance fund. It only dips into the fund to balance its budgets.

[English]

The Chair: As with the previous amendment, BQ-9 seek to increase benefits set out in section 17 of the Employment Insurance Act and in the opinion of the chair the amendment would impose an additional charge on the public treasury. Therefore, I would rule the amendment inadmissible.

Before I turn to clause 214, we have been dealing with employment insurance a fair bit in a lot of amendments. In future budgets, if something applies to other areas, I would pass on a message to the Department of Finance. If other committees looked at some sections of such a bill, it might be wise to send them there, instead of asking this committee to deal with employment insurance measures, which are not our point of expertise as a committee. I just say that in fairness. I'm not saying it's an omnibus bill, but I think it's a valid point.

There are no amendments to clauses 214 to 221. Are there any points that anybody wants to raise? Ms. Raitt, Mr. McColeman, Mr. Liepert, Mr. Caron, are there any points you want to raise on clauses 214 to 221 before we call the question?

(Clauses 214 to 221 inclusive agreed to on division)

The Chair: There is amendment BQ-10 to clause 222. Is anybody here from the BQ? It is deemed moved. Nobody is here to speak on BQ-10 and the consequential amendment BQ-12. They seek to increase the benefits set out in the Employment Insurance Act.

As House of Commons, Procedure and Practice, second edition, states on page 767 and 768:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

I rule that the amendment would impose an additional charge on the public treasury. Therefore, it's inadmissible.

(Clause 222 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Amendment BQ-11 to clause 223 is deemed moved. It's exactly the same ruling as applied a moment ago to BQ-10, so I would rule it's inadmissible, as well as BQ-13.

(Clauses 223 and 224 agreed to on division)

(On clause 225)

The Chair: Next is PV-5. Ms. May.

• (1600)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): I apologize, Mr. Chair, that I wasn't here when PV-3 and PV-4 were put forward. I was in a meeting on HIV/AIDS and I had to decide which meeting to attend. In any event, I didn't know that my amendments had much of a chance if I were here to plead for them.

Can I speak to PV-5 or is it precluded by the earlier defeat?

The Chair: I think it is precluded by the earlier defeat.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Now ruled, if not.

The Chair: We ruled it an amendment that wasn't admissible under PV..

Mr. Ron Liepert: There was no discussion.

The Chair: There was no discussion, and the previous ruling applied to PV-5 as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you for the clarification. I had been misinformed that it was defeated. Thank you for letting me know that it was ruled out of order.

The Chair: It was ruled out of order.

(Clause 225 agreed to on division)

The Chair: There are no amendments to clauses 226 to 238. Are there any points that anybody wants to raise?

Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): On clause 232 and the Canada Marine Act, I know they came to talk about it.

The Chair: Hold on. You want to raise a point in clause 232?

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Yes.

The Chair: We'll deal first with clauses 226 to 231.

Shall clauses 226 to 231 carry?

Mr. Ron Liepert: On division.

(Clauses 226 to 231 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 232)

The Chair: Mr. Ouellette, you want to make a point on clause 232?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: I have a question, Mr. Chair. Have amendments BQ-12 and BQ-13 also been declared out of order? In fact, they involve schedule 1 at the end of the bill, but are related to employment insurance. Perhaps we could deal with that right away.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, we're going to deal with them.

Mr. Ouellette, the floor is yours now.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I don't think the Canada Marine Act should be modified in this way. At the end of the day, this is something they should look at. It's an aberration. I understand why they do it, because they need to go quickly for the 150th anniversary, but I'm not sure that the Port of Vancouver should be heading up these celebrations. I think there are probably more appropriate organizations within Vancouver that can do that. They look at the primary function of these organizations in the long term, so they maintain their mission statement and what they're looking for. Frankly, I'm not sure the Marine Act is the best place to be legislating for the 150th anniversary of Canada. That's just the point that I'd like to make, and I hope the officials hear about us.

• (1605)

The Chair: Shall clause 232 carry?

(Clause 232 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall clauses 233 to 238 carry?

(Clauses 233 to 238 inclusive agreed to on division)

The Chair: The Chair: Okay, we don't have any clauses that have been stood, so we are on schedule 1.

Amendments BQ-12 and BQ-13 are out.

A voice: The short title is next.

The Chair: No, we have to deal with schedules 1 and 2.

Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill as amended?

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): How many copies?

The Chair: Does anybody know? What's the tradition?

So we're agreed that the committee shall order a reprint of the bill.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I believe that completes the bill before midnight. Is there anything else?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Not on this but before we adjourn?

The Chair: Yes, okay. There's nothing else on the bill?

You wanted to raise a point before we adjourn?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Are we meeting Thursday?

The Chair: I don't believe we are. We haven't got anything on the agenda for Thursday, and I think we had last night and today, so I don't see the need. But the staff are trying to work on a proposed schedule for the pre-budget hearings in the fall. We were talking about it earlier and maybe we could raise that point now. We were wondering where the committee should go in B.C., in Alberta, and in Quebec.

It was suggested at the subcommittee discussion that we would try to do the 10 provinces and staff would determine what the costs and schedule would be, etc., as a preliminary for the committee to look at.

I think Ms. Raitt suggested going to Kelowna in B.C.

Where would it be possible in Alberta outside of Calgary and Edmonton?

It was you, Ron, who suggested that could we go somewhere else in Alberta than the usual.

Where might we go in Quebec, Mr. Caron?

I just want suggestions at this stage. We'll have to make a formal plan a little later.

Are there any thoughts?

Mr. Caron, then Mr. Liepert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: I am not opposed to the idea of visiting different cities than the ones we usually go to. Perhaps we could visit smaller communities. However, before making a decision, I think we have to know where the briefs we receive are coming from. For instance if in Alberta we receive a considerable number of briefs from Calgary and Edmonton, it would be logical to hold a meeting in Red Deer, since it is halfway between the two. I think it will really depend on the origin of the presentations, and we probably will not know that before the month of August.

I don't know if we could postpone the discussion to our return, or perhaps we could discuss it at the end of the month of August or the beginning of September. In any case, we will by then have more information on where the briefs came from.

• (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: It's just that if we have names, we can do the preliminary costing and all that kind of stuff—the travel and what weeks the meetings would be in. We could name Montreal, or...

Where has the committee traditionally gone in Quebec, Guy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: To my knowledge, the committee has not travelled since 2011. From 2012 to 2015, the committee has remained in Ottawa and heard testimony by videoconference. I was not a member of the committee in 2011. This will be a new experience for all of us.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): I think that Montreal is visited often. We could go there, but we should also consider Quebec City. As in the Red Deer example, we could also consider Trois-Rivières. I don't know if there are any government members who know Trois-Rivières.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: I know the area somewhat, in fact.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: It would be logical to choose Trois-Rivières, or even Drummondville, since they are halfway between Quebec and Montreal.

[*English*]

The Chair: At least for initial planning we could use Montreal.

Mr. Liepert, you were going to come in on this question.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I was just going to suggest that after I made the comments about Red Deer, there was a point well made that we want to spend as little time as we have to on the road getting to places. Red Deer is not that easy to get to. Let me give it some thought, relative to whether it would be Calgary or Edmonton, but I'd reconsider this.

For costing purposes it won't matter whether it's Calgary or Edmonton, so just cost one or the other, but I'll give some thought as to whether it makes sense to go to one rather than the other.

The Chair: We are hearing from the PBO on June 9, which is next Thursday.

Does the committee also want to hear from the PBO on Mr. McColeman's motion? There's a question from the PBO to discuss the cost estimates for bills. The estimates were released, yesterday and today, on Bills C-239 and C-241. Do we want to hear the costs on those, or not?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. The witnesses for the CRA and the KPMG continuing study have been invited for Tuesday June 7.

Mr. Caron, you look....

Mr. Guy Caron: Is it CRA or CPA?

The Chair: It's CPA. The study is called CRA, but one of the witnesses will be from the CPA.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Since the Parliamentary Budget Officer is often in Ottawa and we want to do a study on the Canada Revenue Agency, could we reverse the dates, to give us the time to choose the witnesses and ensure that they will all be present?

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk has already asked the parliamentary budget officer what would work better for him and his staff. He has indicated that Thursday would work best, so we had best stick with that day.

Okay. Until Tuesday, the committee is adjourned.

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