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Chair

The Honourable Rob Merrifield

Standing Committee on International Trade

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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC)): I'll call the meeting back to order.

We have some business. We want to give direction to the committee as we move into the fall session. Most of this is actually dealt with in our orders. The order of business we will be proceeding on, which takes precedence in committee, will be a piece of legislation that's before the committee: the Panama free trade agreement. But we do have a couple of other items that we want to talk to the committee about.

First of all, we have an official request from the foreign affairs committee, which also looks after international trade—from Iceland. They're visiting on October 1 and 2. It's October 2 that we want to talk about, as to whether we want to carve off a part of that meeting to sit with them. I would suggest the last half-hour. I have talked to the chair of international trade, who actually has his office here. It's a very nice office overlooking Parliament, and he's willing to open it up to have an informal reception after a bit of a formal meeting here, for maybe a half an hour, more for dialogue between the two. We could potentially host a small reception there for them as an act of appropriate hospitality.

You have a motion before you. We need a motion to actually carry that through. Is there any discussion on that?

Don.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Actually, Mr. Chair, I was going to say that the committee business is set out in the orders. The first notice of motion is from Mr. Easter. There is no notice of motion for the meeting you've discussed.

I've just received the request from Iceland, but I would move that the motion by Mr. Easter be dealt with. It's the first item of business. I would so move that.

The Chair: Okay. That's another motion on process. It is certainly the prerogative of the chair to take whichever issues out of the way first; we can certainly go to the other motions if that's what you'd like. I was doing it because these are issues that I didn't think were very contentious, and then we'd get into the motions, but....

You have a motion on the floor. It's non-debatable. So we will call for the vote on the motion to move to Mr. Easter's motion first. Is that what your motion is?

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour of that motion?

Mr. Don Davies: Just for procedure's sake, Mr. Chairman, I was told that, unlike other committees, at this committee we require 48 hours' notice to put a motion on the table. I have no such motion from the Icelandic committee.... I mean, you can do that with unanimous consent, but—

The Chair: That's true. It has to be unanimous consent on that one.

Mr. Don Davies: Right.

The Chair: I assumed we had that because it was non-contentious, I thought, but if you want to contend it we will bring it forward as a notice of motion—

Mr. Don Davies: You've moved to Mr. Easter. I just wanted to get the procedure straight.

The Chair: Yes. The procedure.... You're—

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. I understand correctly.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour of the motion?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Easter's motion?

The Chair: Yes.

Opposed? I see a tie, so I'll break the tie and I will defeat the motion.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: We'll now move to Iceland, if there is no contention on that motion.

Is that your intent—to not have it put it forward?

Mr. Don Davies: No. I would not oppose the motion going forward, Mr. Chairman, but I'd want to speak to it briefly.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Don Davies: I just want to make sure I understand it. I mean, just having received it this morning....

Do we have a date for that?

The Chair: It will be October 2.

Mr. Don Davies: October 2?

The Chair: Yes. We have a meeting that day from 3:30 to 5:30. I'm suggesting that for the last half-hour, from 5 to 5:30, we cut that time out for them as a bit of a sit-down, and then go into an informal setting, which I think would be an appropriate thing to do. Certainly, you can scrap that if you want. That's at the will of the committee.

Mr. Don Davies: I would just say that it would be nice to meet with their committee. We have a number of important issues to discuss. I want to wait and see what happens with the rest of the agenda, but I certainly don't have any objection to meeting with this committee. Because you plan on taking some committee time for this meeting in the next two weeks...?

The Chair: Okay. I'm not sure. Are you speaking against the idea of taking a half-hour of committee time? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Don Davies: Not in substance. I guess all I'm saying is that there are other motions that already deal with this time period, with what happens on October 2 and on the fourth and the other days—

The Chair: Yes. Regardless of—

Mr. Don Davies: I just want to bear in mind that it may push some of the other stuff, because I think some of the other issues are important as well, to make sure that.... I would be happy to do this, but I'd want to make sure we extend the time so we don't lose time for some of the other issues that are before us—like Panama.

The Chair: So that's your idea: you're a little nervous about carving off a half-hour?

Mr. Don Davies: As long as we're mindful of that, so that for whatever we're dealing with that day, we make we sure we have time—a half-hour is only a half-hour. I don't have a serious objection.

The Chair: Just to let you know, I would envision us having an hour and a half for the group of witnesses who are coming forward if we're dealing with a piece of legislation—which I'm sure we will be at that time. We would have maybe a greater number of panels and go for an hour and a half of questions and answers, and bring in the group for the last half-hour. That's how I envision it. I'm certainly open to the will of the committee on that.

Mr. Keddy.

• (1545)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): I'm not sure we need a motion on this at all, Mr. Chairman. I would think we could leave it a little more open-ended. Quite frankly, if there's time at committee—or if we can make time—to have the Icelandic committee sit in on the formal committee hearings, that's always something foreign delegations seem to appreciate, and they have some understanding of the background of how a committee works.

If there's not time—because we do have some fairly important subjects to discuss—then we would simply meet with them after committee. If we could have a half-hour formal meeting during committee, I think that would benefit us and benefit them. If it's not there and there's not time—because we do have other issues to discuss—then we would arrange for a meeting afterwards at the discretion of the chair. That would be fine with me.

The Chair: Is there consensus? I don't think that's contentious.

Mr. Easter, go ahead.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have no problem with taking half an hour and meeting jointly with the committee. I vividly recall pressuring our committee to have a joint meeting with the foreign affairs committee to look at the human rights issue in Colombia, I believe—I'm not sure which country we were dealing with at the time. It was turned down rapidly.

This time the government members seem all for having this joint meeting, and that's fine. I'm always in favour of a joint meeting—not always, but quite often—with other committees when we can serve two purposes, kill two birds with one stone.

I would be in agreement with doing it.

The Chair: Just for clarification on the motion, the motion is not for the foreign affairs committee and our committee to sit for that half-hour. It's for our committee to sit with the Icelandic group. But to defray the cost of the reception after, it would be split between both committees. I've talked to the chair of foreign affairs, and he's certainly willing to do that. I believe they are asking to sit with the foreign affairs committee in the morning. I'm not 100% sure of that, but that's my understanding. That's why I think a little flexibility could make it work.

Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): I think most of it got said, but just to move along here, I would agree that we should meet with them, that they should be invited to come, as Gerald said, and that we would make them welcome at our committee. At the last half-hour or so we would move into an informal discussion with them and then move up to the reception upstairs. That's the direction.

The Chair: I think we have had clarification here, but just to make sure, I'm going to have the clerk read this motion into the record, and then we'll vote on it.

Mr. Don Davies: I have a point, a comment, to make.

The Chair: Let's have it.

Mr. Don Davies: To be frank, what I'm worried about is not doing anything well in this case. I'm just wondering if meeting with them for 30 minutes will be doing them justice. You have people coming from Iceland to talk, and I'm not sure giving them half an hour is sufficient. I'm just wondering if what we should do is schedule an hour after we conclude our meeting. This is a Tuesday. We finish at 5:30. It's just that I know we have important stuff to discuss at each of those meetings. I personally don't want to impact on any of that time in the next little bit.

Why don't we try to meet for one hour after the meeting, from 5:30 to 6:30? I'd certainly be willing to meet at a different time on either October 1 or 2 as well.

We'll end up taking precious time from the committee and not actually doing justice to meeting with them anyway. That would be my alternative proposal.

The Chair: Just from the chair's perspective, that's the whole idea of having a more informal setting afterwards, to extend the time with them so we do have fulsome debate. My experience is that you'll get more out of that two-way communication than you will in the half-hour formal sitting. Actually, the formal sitting is more to tease ourselves with regard to the questions we maybe want to probe with them in a deeper way in a more informal setting. I think we can do justice with it in that way rather than in a whole hour of formal sitting. That's my view.

Is there any debate? I think we've heard everything.

• (1550)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I'm not against taking an hour afterwards.

The Chair: The informal I'm sure would take an hour anyway.

Mr. Don Davies: Why don't we schedule an informal from 5:30 to 6:30?

The Chair: And just leave it at that.

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I agree. Let's do that.

The Chair: Okay—unless they're not available.

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

The Chair: We're good with that?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: So we won't take any time; we'll just do the informal

Mr. Don Davies: For an hour after.

The Chair: —for an hour or so afterwards.

Mr. Don Davies: Sure.

The Chair: Okay.

You're—

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): This is to defray costs.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

The Clerk: In the event that the committee does want to pay for any hospitality related to the meeting with the Icelandic delegation, it would have to adopt a motion to that effect. The motion that's in front of you was prepared by me for consideration by the committee, and I'll read it:

That, subject to availability, the Standing Committee on International Trade meet informally with a delegation of parliamentarians from Iceland, that the Committee defray the hospitality expenses related to this meeting, and that these expenses be equally shared with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, subject to that Committee's approval.

The Chair: All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Moving on to Japan, there are a couple of things here.

We need the motion on hospitality, is that right? I believe there are two motions, one on hospitality and one on gifts. It's kind of a protocol thing that we have to have a motion to be able to accommodate this.

Mr. Cannan, go ahead.

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just think it would be more appropriate that we discuss it in camera. I'd like to move that we go in camera.

The Chair: We have a motion to go in camera now.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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