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Chair

Mr. Royal Galipeau

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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• (1220)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC)): We are now into an open meeting, and Mr. Gill has the floor.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I have two motions that I want to put forward, and I'd like to put the first one. I'll read it out and put in on the record. I do ask for unanimous consent for the committee to debate this motion now, please.

The motion is that in an effort to educate new members and existing members of our committee on how our government has made substantial investment, totalling almost \$5 billion new dollars since 2006, the committee therefore call as witnesses officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs to appear on November 7, 2013. During this meeting, members will be able to question officials on each and every facet of the Veterans Affairs \$3.6 billion of programs, benefits, and services, which the ombudsman himself noted as significant.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I believe the parliamentary secretary said he had two motions. I think that was one. Was I mistaken?

Mr. Parm Gill: That's the first one, and once we deal with this, I have another one to propose.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, if I'm not mistaken, I think the rules of the committee are that we have to give 48 hours' notice in order for it to be discussed. That has to be to the clerk. That's number one.

Number two, I find the parliamentary secretary's motion, if you want to call it a motion, a little bit loaded, on the government side, as a PR exercise.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, a member can't dictate to another member how to word his motion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, I'm expressing an opinion. I'm not dictating; I'm expressing an opinion.

The Chair: One member has presented a motion, and in that motion he's actually asking if he can have the consent to do this. I think the best way to deal with this is to ask if there is consent.

Is there unanimous consent?

There is not unanimous consent, so that deals with that.

Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): I would support Mr. Karygiannis. Should we not be discussing this motion? I can agree or disagree with what he said, but...

The Chair: There can be a discussion if there is consent of the committee to do so. But there is this awkward little thing called 48 hours' notice. In order to set aside the 48 hours' notice, we can count on the goodwill of the committee to give unanimous consent. I asked for it, it didn't happen, so we're moving on to the next.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Can we have a recorded vote on the unanimous consent, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to do so.

We're calling a vote.

[See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: There is no consent. That was my understanding.

That doesn't kill the discussion, but it kills the discussion for now.

An hon. member: Mr. Chair, he has an amendment.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Can I make an amendment?

The Chair: No, it's finished. You voted against the discussion, so there is no discussion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, if I may, on a point of order, I was speaking. You cut me off. You called a vote. You did not give me an opportunity, if I wanted to add something as a friendly amendment to his motion.

I just want to state that for the record.

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): With great respect to my colleague, you can't move an amendment to a motion if a motion is not being discussed. You have to have unanimous consent to forego the 48 hours. Unanimous consent wasn't given, so you can't move any amendments, discussions, or anything until next Tuesday. That's it. We go to the next one now.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a motion that reads as follows: that pursuant to the government's commitment to commemorate the enormous sacrifices made by Canadians and our allies, and given that last year members from all parties paid tribute and remembered those who lost their lives in the service of Canada at a similar ceremony at the National War Memorial, in place of our committee's planned meeting on November 5, we shall instead invite our colleagues who sit in the other place and all our caucus members to attend a special remembrance ceremony at the National War Memorial on November 5 at 11 a.m.

●(1225)

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: That is something I agree with, without question. The only concern, of course, is that November 5 is the next time this committee will meet, if I'm not mistaken. Am I correct on that? Next Tuesday is November 5?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: If it's okay with you guys, if we met at 10 o'clock to do the committee business that we have with these motions and then we scooted over there at 11, I guess it would be appropriate. Could we get consent from the committee to add an extra hour before, from 10 to 11, to deal with the work we have to do? That way we're not losing a full day to do this.

Then, on November 7, your motion won't fit any more. It would have to go to the next one, and then we're moving into Christmastime. If the parliamentary secretary and my Liberal colleague agree that we have the meeting at 10 to do our business and then move over there, I think that would be very appropriate. This is a very good motion.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, if I may, I have absolutely no problem with this motion, but I think we need at least 15 to 20 minutes to move from here to there. We need more time as a committee, so we might want to meet at either 9:30 or 9 o'clock in order to facilitate our business and then join our colleagues.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Whatever you wish.

The Chair: Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: I have absolutely no issue with that, assuming we can find a room and we're able to sort out committee business before heading for the ceremony.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I have the same point. By 11 o'clock we have to be there.

The Chair: Yes, we'd have to be there by five minutes to 11.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Well, a quarter to 11 would be better.

The Chair: This is one place where punctuality is most important.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, going back to our next meeting, are we starting in camera?

The Chair: We start in camera, as already agreed, to deal with committee business.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Gill's motion, which we discussed, was something Mr. Gill wanted originally—I may be out of tune here, and if I am, correct me—discussed in camera as routine proceedings, and then he wanted to bring it out of camera in order to have a recorded vote. I could be going the wrong way, but a call is a call. I'm wondering, if we go in camera and we come out of camera to discuss the other....

The Chair: Routine proceedings are that committee business is de facto in camera without discussion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, regarding the motion we just voted on, the parliamentary secretary wanted to have it as routine proceedings until forced to—

An hon. member: No, it was a previous motion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: For the motion we just voted on, you asked for unanimous consent.

The parliamentary secretary originally wanted to have—

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, one of the things I try to do as chair of this committee is to move on to the next item of discussion after we've had a vote. To discuss the past after the vote has been taken, frankly, just drags this all out.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, right now we learn about our mistakes as we move forward.

The Chair: What I try to do is not to draw too much attention to the mistakes I make. I think it might be to everybody's advantage not to draw attention to the mistakes of the chair, because there will be times when I'll make serious ones. As a rule, I try to be a servant of the committee, without partisanship and with impartiality. I would like to establish, as a routine, that after we've had a vote we move on to the next item.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Chair, I apologize to you. I should have asked you to seek unanimous consent to discuss this motion before I said anything. So I'm asking you if you, as the chair, could seek unanimous consent to discuss this motion and forgo the 48-hour notice. If I'm not mistaken, that's what has to happen.

●(1230)

The Chair: This is Mr. Gill's motion on the ceremony.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The one on the ceremony, yes.

The Chair: Fair enough. Is there unanimous consent?

There is.

Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: That's exactly what my point was going to be. Thank you, Mr. Stoffer, for bringing that up.

The Chair: It looks like we're all of one mind.

We now need to agree at what time we meet before the 11 o'clock meeting. We'll give instructions to the clerk to find accommodations for 9:30 a.m. on November 5 for the meeting that would normally take place at 11 o'clock. We can adjourn at 10:40 a.m. so we can be at the cenotaph for 10:55 a.m.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, if 9:30 is not possible, I would suggest we allow the clerk ample opportunity to either find a meeting on the Monday or after question period on the same date. We should not miss that meeting. I think that's very important.

The Chair: Thank you. I think 9:30 is good.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: If he finds there is no room available for 9:30 a.m., I think we should allow the clerk, in consultation with the chair, to choose another time around that 48-hour period—be it on Monday afternoon or Tuesday afternoon—to convene our meeting.

The Chair: Loud and clear. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): I have a point for clarification.

As we had a routine orders motion put on 48 hours' notice, and we also have the notice of motion from the parliamentary secretary, will we discuss both at that meeting on November 5? I'm simply questioning as a point of clarification, because if you are speaking about the routine procedures, they will be in camera, and afterwards Parliamentary Secretary Gill's motion will be in open....

The Chair: Agreed.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I only wanted to see if what I have stated is correct.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Lizon.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Chair, to Mr. Karygiannis' proposal that we look for a time within the 48 hours, with all respect, all of us here have other duties. I have other committees to attend. Therefore, it would be difficult to move this meeting to Monday, at least for me. I have other commitments, House duty. Tuesday should be the day on which we should meet.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At the risk of disagreeing with my colleague, I think both of those motions deal with business of the committee and both would be in camera.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I misunderstood or did not hear Mr. Chisu's proposal, and I was wondering if he'd be kind enough, through you, Mr. Chair, to repeat what he said, please.

The Chair: Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Chair, my point of clarification was that for the first motion proposed for routine procedures by Parliamentary Secretary Gill, it was voted that we need 48 hours. As we have a meeting in 48 hours, are we discussing this motion?

An hon. member: We don't have a meeting.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: In 48 hours—not in seven, but in 48 hours, which means 48 hours.

The second was the motion that was deferred from the parliamentary secretary regarding Veterans Affairs appearing on November 7 and so on. There were two motions. One is routine procedures and one is the motion. Both are committee business, so just to be sure—and this is my point of clarification—are we discussing this one at the meeting on November 5 at 9:30 a.m. before we go—

The Chair: My understanding was that the second was on the 7th, not on the 5th.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: No, you need 48 hours, and if you're not there for the meeting on the 5th—

The Chair: Okay, we will discuss on the 5th to invite them on the 7th.

Some hon. members: Correct.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Mr. Gill.

• (1235)

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to request that, assuming this motion passes, you be kind enough to send a letter to all parliamentarians inviting them to the ceremony on your behalf.

The Chair: There's something else we'll have to do. We'll have to ask permission. If we're going to the cenotaph as a committee, we're moving off the Hill. We'll have to ask permission from the House of Commons that we move off the Hill. We'll ask the clerk to do what has to be done for that to happen.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, as I was trying to say earlier, I might make another motion to the clerk to discuss what could be a friendly amendment to Mr. Gill's motion that we also invite, at the same time, a limited number of stakeholders, so that we also hear the other side of the coin, the other side of the story, as to how this is not working. Since 2006, although new money has been allocated, this is not what's reflected in the community.

Should my friend across the way—the parliamentary secretary—wish to, he can open his motion again that we put in the parameter that not only do we invite officials, but we also invite stakeholders, which is paramount. I can hear one side of the coin. I also want to hear the other side of the coin about why this is not working.

Consider that either a friendly amendment or a motion.

Mr. Parm Gill: I think that would be a motion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'm seeking unanimous consent, Chair.

The Chair: Let's agree, Mr. Karygiannis, that you're making a worthy suggestion and that your suggestion will be acted on.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: No, Chair. Let me put it this way. I'm seeking unanimous consent that at the same time that we are asking officials to come to present to us, that we actually—either at the same meeting or at another meeting following that—ask the stakeholders to come and give their point of view.

It's either a friendly amendment or a new motion, and I'm seeking unanimous consent, a recorded vote, that we do that.

Or 48 hours....

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, I've been very patient during this meeting because I learn when you speak. But there is a bit of a problem with your amendment.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: I'd like to finish what I have to say.

There is a problem with the amendment you're proposing. The problem with your amendment is that it's an amendment to a motion that doesn't exist. Why doesn't it exist? Because one member of this committee refused unanimous consent for the motion to exist. So there cannot be an amendment to a motion that doesn't exist.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, my colleague might want to bring it forward again, if he wishes to have that amendment in, at which point I'm sure if you sought unanimous consent you might find it.

The Chair: If we're going to have a series of orderly meetings, we can't develop a principle of putting toothpaste back in the tube. Each of us has to assume his own responsibility for the decisions we make here and for the votes we take.

I'm not going back there.

Thank you.

Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The point of the first meeting is to get the officials and get to what is the program, and that's an educational program. That's not the point of the debate. We can ask some questions, and that's fine. But it's not a point of getting into debate about this side or that side. It's a starting point from the Government of Canada, which, like it or not,

is us. But it's a starting point where everybody can be on the same playing field.

Obviously, at meetings after that we're going to hear from stakeholders on all sides of the issue for as long as we want to take. This is not to cut that off at all. It's just a starting point that is simple common sense.

● (1240)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Karygiannis, you have your hand up.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'm just wondering, Chair, if I might in that case serve the clerk, through you, with 48 hours' notice that I will be bringing forward a motion that this committee seek individuals to come and give us their point of view on what the department says. This would be something that we can discuss at the next meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Chair, I have a request.

I put forward a motion, for which we received unanimous consent to proceed, and we're obviously discussing topics other than this particular motion.

I would encourage all members to please stay on topic and discuss the motion currently on the floor. We haven't voted on this yet.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: You didn't have unanimous consent to vote on it.

Mr. Parm Gill: We have to vote on it if we received unanimous consent to debate it. We've debated and now we have to take a vote on it.

The Chair: We're now dealing with our meeting at the cenotaph at 11 o'clock on the 5th of November. I felt that there was agreement around the table. If there is a need for a vote, I'm calling for it now. All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The vote confirms my impression.

Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Chair, I move to adjourn.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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