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Monday, December 11, 2017

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Chair

Mr. Bob Zimmer

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• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC)): We'll bring the meeting back to order.

We have a motion by Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): We have a motion and much vigorous debate.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Originally, I drafted this to read “Wednesday, December 13”, assuming our normal committee day hearing, but there are some rumours, as there always are at the end of session, that we might not be here late Wednesday or that votes will interfere.

The motion is simple:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h)(iii), the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons be invited to appear before the Committee on Tuesday, December 12, 2017, for one hour in her capacity as the Minister responsible for the appointment of the next Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to discuss the effectiveness, management and operation of the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner during the upcoming transition.

That's how the motion reads. I can read it again or slow it down, but everyone gets the gist of what we are suggesting.

The challenge is this. The government wrote to us—and I assume to the Conservatives as well—a week or so ago. We responded this morning, and the announcement was made a few hours later, putting forward Mr. Dion's name. We found out from the nominee for Information—

An hon. member: Lobbying....

Mr. Nathan Cullen: For Commissioner of Lobbying, excuse me.... It's weird, because she applied for Information Commissioner and got lobbying. We found out from the Commissioner of Lobbying how the process worked from her perspective, which I think was very informative for committee members.

I don't want to assume that or put that on the candidate. It can be tricky, and there were a few moments where she didn't want to.... She said, “It's not for me to comment.” It's on the people who are responsible for the nomination process itself. I think Ms. Chagger would be the person. She is the point person for the government on this nomination process, so if there are any questions about how we got here, she would be the best-qualified person to do it. It makes sense for me to have her testify.

I would imagine one hour with the nominee and one hour with Ms. Chagger.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

Is there any further debate or discussion?

Mr. Kent, go ahead.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): We certainly support this motion and have a good many questions for the House leader with regard to the timing, the lack of meaningful consultation, and more or less just the presentation of a name late in the week, with a deadline of noon today for the official opposition's response. We support the motion and look forward to talking to both the nominee and the government House leader.

There are obviously questions we would be interested in, and assurances we would be looking to receive from the nominee regarding the open-endedness—or not—of current investigations in that office.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kent.

Are there any further comments?

Mr. Cullen, go ahead.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I just have a small addition.

It's just to give colleagues on the government side—the Liberals, not the government....

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): They are the same thing.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Not really, a government is a cabinet, but never mind.

It's the question around timing. I'm just giving you a flavour of what we are looking to investigate with Ms. Chagger. Obviously, there would be the same questions we put to the Commissioner of Lobbying in terms of committee composition and how it is structured. There have been recusals on this hiring. I suppose there were recusals on lobbying, too, from within the Prime Minister's Office. I think so. Anyway, it doesn't matter. The recusals...just to be clear, because there has been some indication in the press, but that's not...I can't take that for everything.

That's where we want to go, that openness, transparency piece around it.

• (1550)

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

(Motion negated)

The Chair: We will see you Tuesday at 3:30 in Centre Block. It will be televised. Have a good day. The meeting is adjourned.

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