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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1535)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): Good afternoon everyone.

We are resuming the debate on Ms. Taylor Roy's motion, which we started at the end of Monday's meeting. I think you all have the motion in front of you.

When we ended the meeting on Monday, I had three people on my list. It's Mr. McLean's turn. Then we will go to Mr. Longfield, followed by Mr. Deltell.

Would you like to comment on Ms. Taylor Roy's motion, Mr. McLean?

[*English*]

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): What I was lining up to say at the end of the other meeting is properly led by Mr. Kurek at this point in time, I think.

Thank you.

The Chair: Do the members mind if I substitute Mr. Kurek for Mr. McLean?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

I think all of us around this table would agree that we've had very productive and important conversations. We've heard from the diverse groups who were affected and, as I highlighted at the conclusion of the last meeting, there are some concerns. It feels like we're jumping the gun a little bit here. The timing of not even having received the....

The AER, in response to one of the questions I asked, committed to tabling documentation related to their ongoing review of their process, and with a wider scope than that. They committed to releasing it. They did mention that because it's an ongoing investigation, there were a few things they couldn't talk about, and being the quasi-judicial body that they are, that's understandable. It is totally fair for us to provide feedback if necessary, but without having seen what their reporting, their investigation and their conclusions are, I think that it's premature to jump ahead, and it has the concern that we would attempt to politicize something that has a significant impact.

I know that Ms. Goodridge spent a great deal of time at this committee as the local MP. Again we congratulate her on the birth of her son, although she was not able to be here last Monday as a result.

I would just urge a great deal of caution here, because we're setting precedents that basically allow judging the testimony of witnesses before we have their information. As I articulated, I didn't want to take lot of time at the outset of the meeting with the AER to target one witness, as one particular party did, and it just reeked of political intervention.

Conservatives have been very diligent at endeavouring to get to the bottom of this. We want to ensure that there's trust in the process, and whether that's related to the local impacts, as Ms. Goodridge has articulated.... In my constituency, the energy sector plays a significant role, as would the possible impacts. We need to ensure that this trust is found, and I understand that there are others around this table whose constituencies have experienced those impacts.

When it comes to documentation that has been tabled—I think it's okay that I say this—we have received some of that documentation, but there's a file about an inch thick that Imperial laid on the table, so to speak, and I imagine that is being translated, as is protocol. There's a lot more information that's coming, so I certainly was concerned that the pre-positioning here was to make it more political than I think it should be.

We all want to get to the bottom of this. We've heard from indigenous communities about the fear and the possible impacts. We heard about where there were failures, and I think that it's incredibly important that we navigate this carefully, and that is on top of the concern that I've heard from many of my constituents and from other individuals across the country, the ponderings to not be as concerned, I think, as we ought to be.

I'm using my words carefully here, because this could get really political. I'm endeavouring to keep it not political. There are ponderings that exist to adjust or not care deeply for the role of provincial governments in these matters. I note specifically that because resource development is under federal jurisdiction, with the Alberta Energy Regulator falling under that, we need to be very, very mindful of that situation.

I don't want to get into a big debate about that. Certainly there may be a time for that, but I just want to note how carefully we have to address this. My concern is that if we are moving too quickly on this before we have all the facts, I think it diminishes what has been a very productive number of meetings.

● (1540)

The results are that we have been able to start to get some answers that Canadians expect us to get, and I think all of our constituents would be very proud of the work that we've been able to do to get to the bottom of that.

Mr. Chair, I will leave my comments there for the moment.

In terms of the motion that's at hand, I'd be open to considering some amendments to take out some of what might be inflammatory language, but I'm concerned about the overall direction and the precedent that this committee is setting. If we're going to invite witnesses here.... Just imagine any member of this committee being invited to testify but being told that no matter what they say, they're going to be called a liar. That's a concerning precedent, and I think we should all be really careful about how we approach that.

I would urge caution, because if we make this political, I don't think Canadians would be well served by the standing committee on the environment moving in that direction.

I would urge a great deal of caution as we approach this particular motion and the way that we go forward, especially in light of—and I'll conclude here—the fact that we are going to be studying fresh water. That study will address many of these things, and the previous motion even added specifically that those three meetings' testimony would be included in that study.

That's where I'll leave it for now. I may have more to say later.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you.

Thanks to Mr. Kurek for the clarifications, or at least the openness to look at this.

I think the purpose of the motion is to say that we're not finished yet, that we'd like to see some follow-up and have a follow-up meeting to see the work that is in its early stages right now. By the time we are able to do some follow-up work, we might possibly have some more answers.

I was struck by the word “failure” in the motion. I thought that was a judgmental word. I wonder whether there's a word that might be suggested to substitute for it. “Seeking” might soften it. In saying that they're “seeking” to provide appropriate answers, we at least give some acknowledgement that they are working on getting answers. If there's an amendment that could be suggested, that might be one to be considered.

I think the goal is to say—and I think we mentioned this during the committee hearings—that we would like to have a follow-up discussion with Imperial Oil and with the regulator to see what has

been done in six months' time so that we're not just leaving it to the wind.

The Chair: We'll go now to Mr. Deltell.

I see your point. Maybe it could be something like “Alberta Energy Regulator's inability to provide definitive answers” or something like that.

We'll go to Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have had the honour of representing the constituents of Louis-Saint-Laurent in the House of Commons for seven years now. I have to tell you that this is one of the most interesting committees I have been on and whose proceedings I have followed.

Obviously, I participated in all this. When the study began, I highlighted in my initial remarks that we considered this a fundamental issue and that it was important to take this disaster seriously. This is indeed a disaster for those directly impacted. I said we mustn't be afraid to ask tough questions and be stern with those responsible in our pursuit of satisfactory answers. Those answers are necessary in order to rebuild the trust, and the first nation chief who was the committee's first witness rightly pointed that out. As you will recall, I yielded the floor to those who were directly impacted by the disaster, starting with the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake. Her riding is where the disaster occurred. Giving the member who represents the people directly affected the opportunity to speak and to ask appropriate questions is the least we can do. I do recognize, however, that people elsewhere were also affected.

I am especially proud of the work done by all of the members around the table, considering what a time bomb this could have been from a partisan politics standpoint. Let's not lie to ourselves. Each and every one of us was elected, and partisanship is part and parcel of an election. That is the cornerstone of a politician's job at election time. We know consultations will be held in Alberta. Things could have gone sideways, but they didn't. Why? Because we were all working towards the same goal, getting to the bottom of what happened and hearing first-hand from the people impacted by the disaster, those responsible for the situation and those in charge of making sure it doesn't happen again. Other than a couple of pointed or obtuse comments, which are part of the debate, I was really amazed to see that things didn't go sideways during the three meetings we spent on the study. That's seven and a half to eight hours of listening and debating. Kudos to us all.

Now I'll turn to the motion. Bringing the witnesses back in six months to provide a progress report on the work, to discuss corrective actions and to demonstrate the appropriate attitude is a good idea.

I am also in favour of having access to more documents, of course. However, as Mr. Kurek rightly pointed out a moment ago, those involved have already submitted a huge stack of documents. As soon as they had to provide evidence, documents and supporting information, they did so immediately. We saw that they were prepared, which, by the way, was the least to expect of them. I said this when the president of Imperial Oil was here: for the head of the company to appear before the committee and answer questions that were frankly unpleasant for him but essential to the examination is the bare minimum. It went well.

In short, having access to documents is a no-brainer. If, by chance, we were to call for the information to be released publicly, I would be fine with that.

As Mr. Kurek and Mr. Longfield said earlier, some of the language used may have had a certain tone or connotation. We must always keep in mind the importance of behaving respectfully, no matter who the witness and no matter whether we agree with what they are saying or not. Respect means not calling someone names if we want them to appear before the committee again.

Like Mr. Longfield, I am very concerned about the language that was used, but it is understandable. The first nations members who came before the committee were deeply affected by what happened. They were absolutely right to say that their trust had been lost and needed to be restored. Naturally, if you don't trust the person in front of you, it takes work to rebuild that trust.

As a parliamentary committee, we have to treat the people who appear before us with respect. They are Canadians, like us, with something to say, and we are inviting them to share it with us. Clearly, if we describe them using three or four adjectives that carry a somewhat onerous connotation, that can't be considered an invitation to hear what they have to say.

Basically, we aren't opposed to the underlying objective, but the language chosen to deliver the message needs to be reworked.

• (1545)

I will say it again. As a parliamentarian, I found the study to be an outstanding and positive exercise. We heard from first nations members—the people most affected. We heard from those responsible—the guilty party in the eyes of some and rightfully so. The big boss of Imperial Oil appeared before the committee. The company didn't send a stooge or the 883rd person in the chain of command. It sent the person at the top to meet with the committee. We even found out how much he makes. Some may be interested in his job, should it open up one day. We were also fortunate enough to hear from representatives of provincial and municipal organizations who had to respond to the incident. It wasn't easy for them, but it went well. Let's keep that in mind for future meetings.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1550)

The Chair: Before I give the floor to Mr. McLean, I'd like to know whether you more or less agree with the language I proposed to soften the motion. If I understand correctly, you support the motion, but you think the wording needs to be reworked slightly.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McLean.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The issue we have is that we've heard from a good number of witnesses, some of whom are in the midst of reporting to the various entities that they need to put this together for us.

The presidents of two organizations in particular, Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator, have come here and told us that they have messed up. They've asked for the opportunity to build back some goodwill with their organizations and the communities that they have to serve.

There are also indigenous benefit agreements that some of the first nations and other indigenous organizations noted could have been affected had there been a spill. The lack of communication, of course, is what caused fear, concern and anxiety in those communities.

There's a lot that has to go through the process here. We're hoping that this process to provide us with the final report from each of these organizations occurs within the next couple of months.

October is a long way away for us. With October being a long way away, I don't think our water study.... Unless, Mr. Longfield, we're going to be very astute and quick at this one, I think we'll still be in the midst of our water study. At that point in time, when we actually see the data we have, I think we will have the opportunity to call back the senior members who presented this time.

The way this motion has been presented, before the regulator even presented his thoughts, presupposed that he wasn't going to present fairly. It is political as opposed to resolutive, if you will. How do we get involved, and how do we make sure that we're looking after people?

The environment is our focus here, and making sure that the reporting requirements for those environments are met solidly. I think we have lots of time to consider this motion, not the motion that was dropped on the committee prior to the AER president even testifying, because that's going to have some poison in it in itself.

Let's go through the full.... As I say, there's going to be a report from Imperial about what happened from their perspective, and there's going to be a report from the AER about what happened from their perspective. We're going to have to look at those.

I think it's incumbent upon us as a parliamentary committee to look upon those and what the path is going forward to give some assurances to the communities that we care about, all the way along my colleague Mrs. Goodridge's riding, that are affected by the operations at Kearn. That's our role here. I don't think we need to presuppose, as indicated in the motion as written, that there was not a forthright indication by all of these officials of what happened.

We could park this resolution to a point later in the session—before October, of course—when we actually do have the documentation that tells us, “Here's what happened”, “Here's where the screw-up occurred”, “Here's what we'll do to fix that going forward”, “Here's who is responsible to whom,” and then we come in and say, “How did this happen? Okay. Where did these gaps emerge?”

If it's necessary at that point in time, I think that's the proper timing of it, as opposed to a motion that presupposes that the AER wasn't going to give one of our members the answers that she thought she needed.

I do think there's been a great display of information from all of these organizations, and a great display of the fear and anxiety of the communities along the Athabasca and Slave rivers that are affected by these operations.

That would be what I would propose going forward.

Perhaps the mover, Ms. Taylor Roy, would like to withdraw this motion to look at the documentation that will be due. As Mr. Kurek said, there have been commitments made to provide us with all of the information required.

It's going to be a tome; we know that. We're going to have to go through it.

● (1555)

The details in that tome are going to be important to us in considering what our role is and how we make a report on this part of our water study. I think if we need further clarification after those presentations, we have all the time in the world to do that.

I would ask the mover to think about that and to think about when it is most productive to have this motion put forth so that we can actually ascertain our role in determining a better outcome for the people affected by the actions of both the regulator and Imperial Oil.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLean.

Go ahead, Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you know, I put forward this motion, but I did it in conjunction with the member from the Northwest Territories. The member from Fort McMurray—who I have to congratulate on having her baby as well—was also affected by this.

I appreciate the comments made by Mr. McLean and others, but I feel that regardless of the documentation we see—and perhaps it was the language in the preamble that made you think otherwise—

the intent really is for us to follow up after time has passed to see what has been done.

I think, given the fact that we have had all the testimony at this point from the AER, Imperial Oil and the first nations and Métis people, that we are at a point where we can put forward a motion to say that we want to have that follow-up meeting.

A number of points were made, and I am amenable—and I believe Mr. McLeod is also amenable—to changing the preamble somewhat, as long as we have the follow-up meetings set, which is the point of this motion.

Mr. McLean, you brought up the benefits agreement again, but we were told very clearly by the first nations and Métis people that they felt those agreements had now been broken and that there was a real lack of trust.

I think it's incumbent upon us, although we are not responsible for natural resources but for indigenous affairs and indigenous land, as a federal government, to have a responsibility to the first nations and Métis, given what has happened, to follow up to be sure that what is said is going to be done is in fact done, and that it's satisfactory to them.

I would like to have this motion put forward, and with a date in October.

I don't believe we've called them liars in here. The language the chair put forward, “inability to provide definitive answers”, changes the tone of it. Again, I am amenable to other changes to the preamble.

I do believe that it would be respectful of us to move this motion now that we've heard the testimony, and make sure that the first nations and Métis people who came and spoke to us very passionately realize that we are taking this seriously and that we understand they do not trust the AER and Imperial Oil right now, and that it will take time to rebuild that trust. In the interim, we are willing to follow up in October to see what has been done and to play that kind of role. As I said, I think it's completely appropriate to do that.

I don't know if you want to add anything to what I had to say, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I just quickly want to add a little.

I want to say that it was hard to sit here and listen to people say that we were bringing forward a motion in bad faith. We followed all the rules. We certainly followed the committee rules. I was told I couldn't bring the motion forward; it had to be a regular member. The regular member brought it forward and then left, so it came back to me; but she is back again, so it's back in her lap again.

We tried to do our best to follow all the rules. I think the intent of the study was to try to find out what happened and how it could be fixed.

I feel very content that I was able to sit here and join in, because I heard the president from Imperial Oil and I heard the regulator speak. As a person who lives downstream from some of the activities that are happening in the south—and everything that flows into the water flows across my doorstep—I probably heard more in those presentations than I have heard in all of my life from those people who do that to make their living.

I also heard them say that more investigation needs to be done. They need more answers. They need more tests, more studies. It just made sense to me to have them come back and fill those gaps and provide the information they will have gathered, probably, over the summer.

I would appreciate it if that is something that could happen, because I think we're all on the same page here. It's just that maybe we didn't use the proper wording, and if that's the case, then maybe we need to revisit how we worded it. Maybe a little bit too much emotion was put into the drafting, but it wasn't the intent to upset anybody; the intent was to try to get all the information we could so that we know what happened and how they're going to prevent it from happening again.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by thanking the committee for having me temporarily. I am pleased to stand in for my colleague, the member for Victoria. She asked me to propose an amendment to the motion. It was sent to the clerk, and I believe it went out to the committee members.

I am proposing an addition—

The Chair: Did you send the amendment by email?

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): It just came in.

The Chair: Please continue, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an addition to paragraph (a), where it says that the committee should “invite the CEO of Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator for a two-hour meeting in October 2023” and so on. I propose amending that part to also invite the Government of Alberta’s Minister of Environment and Protected Areas and the Government of Canada’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

I'll explain briefly why I am proposing this amendment, which I consider a friendly amendment.

The reason is simple. Companies and government regulators have responsibilities, but we live in a democratic system where ministerial responsibility also comes into play. Political leaders also have to answer for appalling incidents like these. We need to find out what measures were taken and what else needs to be done. Without accountability from political leaders, it's too easy to hide behind statutes and regulations, under the pretext that they don't allow this or that, or that they make no mention of the issue. At the end of the day, the ministerial responsibility falls on the provincial

and federal governments. We think the two ministers should appear so they can't push the responsibility onto the other. We are not interested in a game of ping-pong. We want both of them to answer the committee's questions to help us get to the bottom of things. Each of them has a political responsibility for the decisions that were made and the actions that were taken or still need to be taken.

As I see it, this is a friendly amendment that is in keeping with our institutions and the manner in which they work. Ministers are always invited to appear before committees to answer members' questions, so it would be really helpful to hear from the two ministers on this issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

We now have Mr. Boulerice's amendment on the floor for debate.

Would anyone like to comment?

Go ahead, Mr. Lake.

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): This is a fairly substantial amendment. Can we pause for a few minutes so that we can have a quick conversation and discuss it?

Thanks.

The Chair: I'll pause the meeting.

• (1600)

(Pause)

• (1605)

The Chair: We'll end the pause.

An hon. member: I would call for a vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair, I didn't have my headset on, so I didn't hear the amendment. I apologize.

The Chair: The amendment is essentially to add to the list of invitees the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas from Alberta and the federal Minister of Environment.

(Amendment negatived: nays 9; yeas 2 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The amendment is defeated. We'll keep going with our previous speakers list.

I was at Mr. Kurek.

• (1610)

Mr. Damien Kurek: I'm—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you're on the list as well, but we haven't come to you yet.

Mr. Kurek, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you, Chair.

After some productive discussion, I believe Mr. Lake has an amendment that he'd like to propose, so I will cede the floor to him.

Hon. Mike Lake: There are a few minor cleanup amendments too. I don't know if I should move them all. I think I'll move the main one first.

In the preamble, we would remove the words starting with "and following" all the way to "communities at risk. That".

It would read, "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee", and from there, we'd clean up part (a) a little bit. I can come back to a minor cleanup, but I will say that the words "never happens again" don't really make sense in the context. I think we all agree that we don't want to ever see it again. We want them to come to address the issues resulting from the tailings pond leak. It would end at "tailings ponds leak", and then paragraph (b) is fine.

The start of (c) is redundant. We don't need the phrase "that these meetings take place in October 2023". We determined that in (a), so it would just start with "That these meetings".

We would prefer that we don't make the decision on televising right now, but we talked to Mr. McLeod and he wants to make sure that they're televised. We understand that, so we're good with that. It would be, "That these meetings be televised and that the evidence gathered". That would all stay in. It would start with "that these meetings be televised".

The Chair: Can you read the whole thing?

Hon. Mike Lake: Sure.

As amended, it would say, "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee: (a) Invite the CEO of Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator for a two-hour meeting in October 2023 to provide this committee with updates on what steps they took since April 2023 to address the issues resulting from the tailings pond leak". Paragraph (b) stays as is, and then it continues: "(c) That these meetings be televised, and that the evidence gathered during these meetings be taken into consideration during the study of fresh water."

The Chair: Is there any debate on this amendment?

[Translation]

Over to you, Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Finally, it's my turn.

First off, I want to say that I missed two of the meetings. I was at the first one, when we heard from the indigenous community representatives. I have to tell you that, since I've been a member, seldom have I felt as much emotion as I did that day. It really gave me a lump in my throat.

I want to thank everyone for their comments. It helped bring me up to speed on what happened at the next two meetings, which I missed while I was paired with a minister.

I am in favour of Mr. Lake's amendment. To me, the fact that the company and the regulator are sending us pages and pages of documents isn't what matters. What matters is finding out what they have done. What actions have they taken since their appearance before the committee in April? Those are the documents that matter most, and the motion covers that.

I support Mr. Lake's amendment. We could meet with them in the fall.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): I call for the vote, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Chair: All right.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

• (1615)

The Chair: We are now resuming debate on the motion as amended.

First on my list, I have Mr. Lake, followed by Ms. Pauzé. Does that still work?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, is it possible to get the amended version emailed out just so that we are operating with certainty on what our path forward is?

The Chair: Okay, we can do that.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you.

Can we pause until we do that?

The Chair: We will pause.

• (1615)

(Pause)

• (1620)

The Chair: You have received the motion as amended, so we can vote. Did everyone receive the motion as amended?

Could somebody call the vote?

Mr. Terry Duguid: I call the vote.

A voice: I thought it was unanimous.

The Chair: Is it unanimous?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Do we need to do the roll—

Mr. Damien Kurek: Chair, because there have been a few times when we've passed things without having.... Give us a few seconds so that somebody can talk, or, if you wouldn't mind, allow us a moment to ensure that we're all on the same page in both official languages.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I just want to point out something very minor in the French version, Mr. Chair. In the French version, paragraph (c) says “*qu'elles soient télévisées*”. It's understood that it refers to the meetings. In the English version, it says “that these meetings”. In other words, the English version specifies that we are talking about the meetings, unlike the French version. What's meant in the French is understood, but since we're looking at the versions, we might as well be specific and say “*que les réunions soient télévisées*”. That said, I won't hold out for the change.

The Chair: We don't need a motion to fix things like spelling.

I'm going to read the English version of the amended motion first, and we'll make any minor changes as needed.

[English]

It reads, “That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee a) invite the CEO of Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator for a two-hour meeting in October 2023, to provide this Committee with updates on what steps they took since April 2023, to address the issues resulting from the Kearl tailings pond leak....”

We're adding “Kearl” and taking the “s” from “ponds” to put it onto “tailings”.

Mr. Greg McLean: To be accurate, Mr. Chair, it's “seepage and spill”, not “leak”. There was one spill and there was.... Seepage was the first indication.

The Chair: You want to change “leak” to “seepage and spill”. Is that it? Okay.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Yes, okay. Good.

Next, it reads “b) that during the meetings, Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator provide the committee with the documents that support the actions they took; c) that these meetings be televised and that the evidence gathered during these meetings be taken into consideration during the study of Freshwater”.

I don't think “freshwater” needs a capital “f”.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Deltell, you seemed to say earlier that we needed to add something to the English version.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No, the French version.

The Chair: All right.

Is everyone fine with the English version?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We have unanimous agreement on the English version.

Now I'll read the French version:

Que, conformément à l'article 108(2) du Règlement, le Comité:

a. Invite le PDG de la Compagnie Pétrolière Impériale Ltée et l'Alberta Energy Regulator à une réunion de deux heures en octobre 2023 afin qu'ils fournissent au Comité des mises à jour sur les mesures qu'ils ont prises depuis avril 2023 pour résoudre les problèmes résultant de la...

[English]

What did you say? Was it “seepage and leak”?

Mr. Greg McLean: It was “spill”.

The Chair: It was “seepage and spill”.

Mr. Greg McLean: The first incident in May of last year was four indications of seepage, and the one in—

The Chair: It's “seepage and spill”.

[Translation]

The French version will no longer refer to “*la fuite*”. Instead, it will say “*déversement*” and.... What's the French word for “seepage”?

Ms. Alison Clegg (Analyst): The word used in the briefing note is “*suintement*”.

The Chair: Did you say “*suintement*”? I just learned something.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Me too.

The Chair: In the French version, then, it will say “*suintement*” and “*déversement*”. We also have to add the word “Kearl”. It would refer to “*bassins de décantation*”....

[English]

Mr. Michael McLeod: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Michael McLeod: I am having a hard time following, because sometimes the French is on the English channel and the English is on the French channel, and then it reverses back. I've been trying to switch, but I can't keep up.

The Chair: Okay.

[Translation]

Can you hear me on the English channel?

Mr. McLeod isn't hearing me.

[English]

Mr. Michael McLeod: I'm on the English channel and you're speaking French—

The Chair: Well, you should put.... That's what you need to do, yes.

Hon. Mike Lake: On a point of order, with respect, I think the translator said that it's confusing when individual people are switching from English to French. That's what is causing the problem.

[Translation]

The Chair: All right. We'll stick with French, since we're talking about the French version of the motion.

Mr. McLeod, can you hear me on the English channel?

Mr. Michael McLeod: Yes, it's fine now.

The Chair: Great.

Let's go to paragraph (b) of the motion:

b. Qu'au cours de ces réunions, la Compagnie Pétrolière Impériale Ltée et l'Alberta Energy Regulator fournissent au Comité les documents qui appuient les mesures qu'ils ont prises;

I believe paragraph (c) was where you wanted to make a change, Mr. Deltell, was it not? Instead of “*qu'elles soient télévisées*”, it would say....

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I propose keeping the same wording that's used in the other two paragraphs of the motion. Accordingly, it would say “*que ces réunions soient télévisées*”.

The Chair: Paragraph (c) of the motion would read as follows, then:

c. Que ces réunions soient télévisées et que les témoignages recueillis lors de ces réunions soient pris en considération lors de l'étude sur les eaux douces.

We'll send out a new version of the motion shortly. Then, we can adopt the motion unanimously and move on.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Chair, in light of all of that, I think we've got to the point where we are comfortable with it. It can be distributed, but I would certainly be comfortable with moving forward.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, if I'm not mistaken, you have another motion you'd like to propose.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes.

Now that we've done that motion, I have a second one. It's following up on the gracious invitation of the member for Fort McMurray-Cold Lake. She was asking each one of us if we'd like to come up.

I had circulated this motion before the meeting, but maybe we can circulate it now, so that we have it in both official languages.

I'd like to move that the committee book travel to Fort McMurray to witness the environmental damage caused by the Kearl tailings pond leak, that the committee and its analysts use the evidence gathered on this expedition to be part of the study on fresh water and any future study on tailings ponds leaks, that the clerk of the committee be empowered to draft a travel budget and present it to the committee, and that the committee review this travel budget no later than May 15.

I think we have a May 1 deadline to get things in front of the Liaison Committee. That's why I thought I would get this motion on the floor.

• (1630)

The Chair: Logistically speaking, I believe we would have to get it in front of the liaison committee by May 12. You would have to modify the date of your motion so that the committee could look at it by.... I don't know what May 12 is.

A voice: May 11 is our Thursday meeting.

The Chair: We would look at it on May 11.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauté: Wasn't there a deadline for that, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, the deadline is May 19, but practically speaking, we need to submit our request by May 12.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thanks to Mr. Longfield for moving this. I certainly encourage all Canadians to visit Fort McMurray, Canada's oil sands and some of the incredible landscapes. It'll take your breath away. I can assure you all of that.

I would note, however, that this is very specific. In some of our previous discussions related to the upcoming freshwater study, we had specified a few deadlines to get recommended locations that the committee would be able to travel to.

I believe—maybe the chair or Madam Clerk would be able to correct me—that the deadline for those was a few weeks ago. We had submitted that. We actually had put Fort McMurray on the list as a great stop. My question is.... This is very specific, but it's related to the freshwater study.

With that upcoming deadline and some of the conversations that we had about proposed committee travel in relation to some of the other locations that may be valuable across the country, I'm curious as to where that's at.

The Chair: We've agreed to go to Fort McMurray. The same deadline would apply, as far as I know. We'd have to get in any other travel recommendations by May 12.

Has anyone submitted anything in writing? Is that what you're saying, Mr. Kurek? Have you submitted something in writing for travel for the freshwater study?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Yes, we have. I canvassed our members and had—

The Chair: Did you send something in?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. I'm sorry. I'm not aware of it. It might have been distributed and then I didn't see it.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I'm sorry, Chair.

I'd have to go back and look, but the conversation we had was in camera, I believe, so I won't go into details to protect that. It was that we would have until prior to Easter—that was the expected timeline—to submit a list of prospective travel locations.

I'm concerned.... If we're moving a motion to travel to Fort McMurray, I would suggest that there is more than just the area that's been impacted by this. There is some tremendous.... In fact, the mayor of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo had a bit of time to share how they have developed incredible clean-water partnerships with indigenous communities.

If we're limiting the travel to just the leak, that's one thing, but in terms of the larger travel, we expect—certainly from the conversations we've had—that this freshwater study is going to be a big study. To ensure that we can get, before the deadline, some of the suggested locations and figure out if we're going to hold hearings as well....

That was an outstanding question that I had. Would we be traveling for committee members to view locations? Would we be ensuring that we could hear from indigenous communities or other affected areas?

My comment, and I think the larger question, is that instead of adopting one motion—and I haven't had a chance to speak with my colleagues—my personal preference would be for us to look at the larger committee travel proposal and include Fort McMurray, the Kearl site and the tailings pond. I think that's entirely reasonable. To have the tailings pond as well is very reasonable.

We would have to have that larger committee proposal in before the May 19 deadline in order to get it to the Liaison Committee so that we can go through the process. The study will start in the fall.

I encourage the committee. Maybe a motion is the right way, but just to have some of these conversations would be valuable, I think.

• (1635)

The Chair: Okay.

Before I go to Madame Pauzé, Mr. Deltell and Mr. Duguid—

Mr. Greg McLean: I'm in line here, too, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're in line. I'm sorry, Mr. McLean.

Here's an idea. You say you've already submitted something, and we have called for submissions. We didn't put a date. Why don't we ask everybody to submit their ideas for travel for the freshwater study by Wednesday of next week? I can sit down with the analysts and we can work up a proposal and come back to you whenever the next meeting is. It's May 11, I think, or even before. We'll work on that. We'll see what we can put together.

In the meantime, we could still adopt a motion saying that at a minimum we'll go to Fort McMurray. We'll have everyone submit their travel proposals by next Wednesday. I'll work with the analysts and the clerk. We'll try to drum up some kind of plan and we'll discuss it with the steering committee and then come back to the committee with a final proposal.

Does that work? We've adopted unanimously the idea that we're going to go to Fort McMurray and visit the Kearl site, at a minimum.

Hon. Mike Lake: At this point I don't want to just adopt this motion. This is the first time we've seen it, and there might be a few changes I want to make to the motion.

On the spirit of going to Fort McMurray, absolutely, but on the motion as written, I have some thoughts.

The Chair: Okay.

The motion has been tabled, so we have to debate it.

Hon. Mike Lake: Can we take another couple of minutes, because we just saw it?

The Chair: In between, I just want to propose to everyone to send in their travel proposals by Wednesday, and we'll start working on something.

We'll go back to the motion. You need a minute.

Okay, we'll suspend for a few minutes.

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1640)

The Chair: We'll reconvene.

It looks like there have been discussions among the parties.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

• (1645)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

I'd first like to say that it sounds like everybody wants to go to Fort McMurray, but it's also part of submissions that we're going through governance on to see where we want to go as a committee, so I'll withdraw my motion so that we could have some committee business to discuss the three locations Madame Pauzé has and the ones that the rest of us have. I think the intention is to get to Fort McMurray. Let's just find out how we can do that with the—

The Chair: Finally the Conservatives have sent a travel proposal in. Madame Pauzé has sent in travel proposals. Monsieur Boulerice, you can send in travel proposals, and the Liberals too. We're going to crunch those and see what comes out of it.

Does somebody have their hand up?

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: A few weeks ago, Mr. Longpré asked us to send him suggestions as to where the committee should go. We sent in our suggestion, Fort McMurray.

The only thing we don't know, though, is how many days the committee can travel for. What do the rules say about that?

The Chair: There aren't really any rules. It depends on what the Liaison Committee agrees to.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: All right. Great.

The Chair: Mr. Longfield wants to withdraw his motion, so we need unanimous consent.

Do I have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: We'll come back to that later.

Does anyone have anything else to discuss?

We have 40 minutes left. We can go in camera to continue looking at the fossil fuel subsidies report.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I have a question, Mr. Chair. We voted on Mr. Lake's amendment, but did we vote on the motion as amended?

The Chair: I believe so. Actually, there wasn't a vote. The amended motion was adopted unanimously.

We'll suspend briefly to go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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