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Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

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•(1255)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): First and foremost, Tom, I do appreciate the fact that you're allowing us to go public. I want to reinforce that from our perspective, it is in Canada's best interests that we do have an open process that engages all Canadians. In fact there is a need for us to be going outside of Ottawa. Canadians had a huge expectation—given the issues of the in-and-out scandal, robocalls, over-expenditures, the issues facing Elections Canada, and the amount of attention that has been given to the issue and how Canadians feel as a whole—and the legislation has fallen short of meeting that expectation.

If we are allowed to go outside of the city of Ottawa, then we are providing, I believe, an opportunity for the committee to make presentations in all regions of the country and to try to build back some of the confidence that Canadians have lost in the election law that is being proposed.

I think that is very important for us to recognize. I would like to see the committee meet consistently, and you've indicated that we'll be able to do that in public.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair. I just want to remind all members of the committee that our lease in this office expires in two minutes and 30 seconds. I'm chairing another meeting in this room with the human rights subcommittee. We've had someone fly in to be at this meeting.

The Chair: Thank you. I'll remind Mr. Lamoureux his clock is different from the one we're using.

Let's go.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I will conclude my remarks by saying, Mr. Chairperson, that I implore the government to work with..., on a consensus basis, as opposed to just a government basis. If we could work with consensus, we'd be able to do a much better job at achieving electoral reform that Canadians would be content with.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lukiwski, I think you were next.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Yes, and I'll be very brief, because I know David wants to put his motion on the table again, and that's fair.

I understand completely your desire—and I believe it is echoed by the NDP—to go outside and have meetings outside of the Ottawa bubble. I will commit to you. I don't agree with it right now, but I've heard your arguments, at least some of them, and I will certainly consult with my colleagues and I'll come back to you in very short order. It might not even be at a meeting but just by getting you in the hallway or something like that.

However, what I do want to impress upon you and what I hope we can achieve right now is to agree to bring the minister and perhaps one other witness before the committee on Thursday to start the hearings. We may be at an impasse later on, but at the very least, if you're serious about trying to examine the contents of this bill, let's agree to have the minister and one other witness here on Thursday.

Do we have that agreement?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: We will if you'll agree that we'll go outside of Ottawa. You give us that agreement and I'm okay with it, but you have to give us the agreement that we go—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I told you I'd get back to you on that, Kevin. If you want to start examining the bill, you have to have the minister here. It's your opportunity to question him. What's the problem with that?

•(1300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: But you're asking us to trust you, Tom.

The Chair: We have one minute, folks.

Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thanks, Chair.

First of all, I appreciate the opportunity. I will duly move my motion so it is on the floor. In quick response, we're running out of time. Given the indication that you're willing to go back and look at some possibility of hearings outside the Ottawa bubble, all we need to resolve then is who the second person would be on Thursday, and it should be Mayrand.

So we'd have the minister for one hour and we'd have Mayrand for the second hour.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: There's no agreement on that, Mr. Chair, not unless we get an agreement from the government to have meetings outside of Ottawa.

Mr. David Christopherson: Who has the floor, Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Christopherson has the floor for another minute.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, Chair.

All I wanted to point out...I'll let my colleague have his moment.

I'm indicating that on behalf of the official opposition if we can get an agreement that the first hour is the minister and the second hour is Monsieur Mayrand and that there will be enough time at that meeting for Mr. Lukiwski to respond to us in terms of our request for hearings outside the Ottawa bubble, we can agree with that and get this show going.

However, my motion, Chair, would still be in order and the first item of business if we don't have a satisfactory sort of side agreement beforehand.

The Chair: Right. Your chair will do his best to do both things.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I have no problem with Mayrand if he can make it.

The Chair: I think the minister is the appropriate first witness. We'll try for second witnesses based on what we can work out. Monsieur Mayrand may or may not be able to. We still have to finish this work also, so that may be part of what we're doing next meeting.

Also, your motion, of course, would still be there. Mr. Lukiwski has tabled a motion also.

Mr. David Christopherson: I think the important thing, Chair, is that if it can't be Mayrand, then it can't be just somebody plugged in. That's who we want—Mr. Mayrand—and if he can't make it, then I'd appreciate you coming to us, because I have a....

Anyway, that's—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: We can agree off-line, sir.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, this is a steering committee. The point is that the Liberal Party does not agree with having this meeting unless we get the commitment.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Well, if you wanted consensus, I think we got pretty good consensus. You're the one who kept saying let's work by consensus.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Well, I didn't expect the NDP to sabotage it.

But okay, fine; if that's the—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Oh, come on, Kevin. You're better than that.

The Chair: On that note, and with all the friendship in the room, we will be adjourned until Thursday.

Thank you very much.

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