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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Tuesday, May 15, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon**

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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

[Translation]

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. We will now begin the special meeting requested by members of the committee.

Ms. Folco will begin. She is the first on the list.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I gave the clerk a motion requesting that this committee meet. I wouldn't call it a special meeting, but rather a regular meeting. Last Tuesday, on May 8, at this time exactly, we were scheduled to have a meeting in order to discuss the Court Challenges Program. Through you, Mr. Chairman, we had witnesses come here. We were very surprised—and I'm speaking for myself and the members of my party—when you cancelled the meeting with no prior notice, approximately two minutes to 9 o'clock.

I would like to state on behalf of the Liberal caucus that there was no reason to cancel that meeting without discussing it first with the committee members. Do not forget that they elected you. You are responsible for your actions and you are accountable before the committee members. That is why I asked for this meeting. I saw no reason justifying the cancellation of that meeting. Until Tuesday morning, two minutes to 9 o'clock, everyone had agreed on that meeting taking place. We all agreed, all parties included, on holding a meeting and on the subject of that meeting. Furthermore, the witnesses who had come from Winnipeg and Montreal were just as surprised as we were to find out that the meeting had been cancelled.

Mr. Chairman, because I have the floor for a few minutes, I would like to add that this may not be a breach of the standing orders, but it is very clearly unusual. I would also like to add that taxpayers' money was wasted that day because witnesses flew in from Winnipeg and drove in from Montreal. Their travel costs were paid by this committee. Let us never forget that costs incurred by the House and this committee are always covered by Canadian taxpayers. If you had discussed the cancellation of this meeting with committee members and if we had made the decision to cancel, then we would also have had the time to notify the witnesses.

For all these reasons, I felt it was important to have this meeting this morning in order to ask you to report to all committee members and to respect the agenda that we all agreed to approximately 10 days or a week ago.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, you cancelled the meeting without discussing this with the opposition parties. I have before me Marleau-Montpetit. On page 843 it states, and I quote: "Where the meeting has been convened by order of the committee, the chair consults with representatives of the various parties before sending the cancellation notice." We never received that notice.

Furthermore, this meeting was cancelled in a cavalier fashion and in a way that was very disrespectful towards the committee members and the witnesses who came here to discuss the Court Challenges Program. Mr. Chairman, you must not forget that you are the committee chairman but you are not its supreme leader. The committee is master of its own agenda and its own schedule.

Furthermore, we had agreed that we were meeting that day in order to discuss the Court Challenges Program, regardless of any other activities taking place in Canadian society, or even internationally.

We are very disappointed with your attitude. You cancelled this meeting in a cavalier fashion and in a way that was disrespectful towards committee members and towards French and English minority language communities in Canada and Quebec who asked us to go through this exercise. This had been initiated precisely in response to these communities' requests.

Mr. Chairman, I would be ashamed in your position. I am very disappointed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Chairman, would you like us to leave and then you could make up a schedule, show it to us and we will just do as you please? Is that what the Standing Committee on Official Languages has become? I have been sitting on this committee since 1998 and I have never seen a chairman act in this fashion. It's all very well to read Marleau-Montpetit or the standing orders, but one has to look at the underlying intent of the standing orders.

I understand that a chairman has the right to cancel a meeting if, for example, the witnesses don't show up that morning. That has happened in the past and it has not been a problem. Witnesses have cancelled at the last minute, we have been advised of this, and the meeting has been cancelled. I have seen things like this happen, however, Mr. Chairman, the reasons you gave are an insult to the minority francophone community of Canada. You're telling us that we're too political. Welcome to politics! Is it the Conservative government's intention to tell us now that Question Period has become too political and therefore that will be cancelled as well? I have never seen something like this happen since 1998. You told the media that we have heard enough about the Court Challenges Program.

Mr. Chairman, you are only one individual. You must remain neutral within this committee. You are here to rule when the committee is divided but not to impose your will. You are acting in an anti-democratic fashion, absolutely anti-democratically. You did not even have enough respect to ask to call a special meeting. Nothing prevented you from being respectful enough to call us to a meeting and tell us that you were uncomfortable, if that was the case.

The federal government had to pay to bring witnesses from Winnipeg and Montreal. In the Canadian Press it says that today your party's whip stated that we did not think there would be a hue and cry throughout the country if the committee did not sit. Are you going to call that political? When I think about a committee as important as the Standing Committee on Official Languages and the work that it has done! You said yourself before the cameras that we did a national tour and that we wrote a good report for the House of Commons. And your party's whip said that this wouldn't bother anybody!

Is this committee a waste of time? This is an insult to the francophone community and to minorities. I am very disappointed. I never thought it would get to the point where a chairman would show complete disregard for democracy in Parliament and would take communities' right to speak to us away. I cannot find words to qualify your actions. I think a chairman is important. He is the person who convenes the meetings, the person who allows democracy to express itself and who gives us an opportunity to express ourselves.

Not only did you cancel last Tuesday's meeting but you also cancelled Thursday's meeting. You called no special meeting to discuss this. You simply stated that today we would discuss future business. That means that all the decisions that we took democratically were rejected by one person. That is contrary to democracy in this country. It shows how your government operates and that is not partisanship. It shows that your government acts against the rights of minorities in our country.

You were embarrassed by the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program. That's the real problem. As chairman, you should be ashamed. I look forward to hearing what you are going to say about this. You have the right to cancel a meeting, I acknowledge that, but you must have good reasons for doing so, for example, if the witnesses do not show up and so on. However, you do not have the right to tell us that you do not like the topic, that you have heard enough and that the issue has become too partisan. Allow me to recall the bill implementing the Final Nisga'a Agreement.

● (0910)

At the time, the Reform Party or the Canadian Alliance, which formed the opposition, tabled 471 motions before the House of Commons. We had to vote from Monday evening to 6 o'clock Wednesday morning. Was that a waste of time and money for Canadians? It was costly but that is democracy. The opposition has the right to table motions in the House of Commons and we respected that right. Parliament sat for three days, night and day. Was that partisanship? Could one not question partisanship in that case? Mr. Chairman, who are you to tell us what partisanship is? We are in politics, this is a parliamentary committee and each political party has the right to put questions.

Mr. Chairman, I want to know what your real reasons were. If this was your own decision, then I am very, very disappointed. If it was a government decision, then I am not surprised at all because it reflects the position that it took this past year: it cancelled the Court Challenges Program, the status of women program, and the literacy program. I could give you several other examples.

The government's decision to take that direction has nothing to do with me but it won't prevent the Official Languages Committee from looking into the reasons. Even the Official Languages Commissioner asked for a moratorium on the Court Challenges Program last year, until the study of this issue had been wrapped up. We're not the only ones questioning this. One hundred and seventeen complaints were laid with the Official Languages Commissioner. During our trip throughout all regions of Canada, a trip that you think was useless, you can't say otherwise—You said yourself that this is a good report.

What is the problem Mr. Chairman? What do you think about parliamentary democracy when your whip states that there will no longer be an Official Languages Committee if you are relieved of your duties? Where is democracy in a Parliament that sends soldiers to die in order to implement democracy in other countries while in our own country you are suppressing democracy? You should be ashamed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (0915)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. D'Amours.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will continue along the same lines. For a few weeks we have been listening to the Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages. If your government abolishes the Official Languages Committee, then maybe it will also want to do away with the official languages portfolio.

Is that the point you are trying to make, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Point of order. These are random assumptions. Let's focus on the current issues. It's quite an exaggeration to extrapolate that the minister wants to shut down the official languages department.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for ruling that my colleague did not actually have a point of order.

Some serious questions must be asked when we hear the comments that we did in the media with respect to the direction your government might be taking. We have to look at reality. These days we're trying to convince people to vote. We're trying to give young people in schools a reason to vote once they have reached voting age. We're trying to show them that progress is possible and that we live in a democracy.

Living in a democracy also means that we have the right to speak. We have the right to free speech in Canada. Some countries do not have that right. To decide yourself or in collaboration with your party to cancel a meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages—Acting contrary to a democracy is a dictatorship. One needs to be very, very careful. If we want to show our young people and the Canadian public that it is important to vote, then we also have to prove to them that we live in a democracy.

For a few weeks now we have been hearing the Minister responsible for Official Languages tell the House that the committee is master of its own fate and that the committee members are masters of the committee. I would like that minister to come here this morning and explain what she means by masters of the committee when you took a unilateral decision to cancel such an important committee meeting with two minutes' notice.

Members on the other side of the House may have said that enough had been said about the Court Challenges Program, but just because some individuals are no longer interested in the issue does not mean that we, the official languages communities, must automatically go down on our knees before them and stop moving forward.

The cancellation of the Court Challenges Program was criticized by everyone. I heard some individuals say that we shouldn't be concerned, that we still had the right to go before the courts but that we would have to go it alone or request legal aid.

The purpose of the study of the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program was to ensure that official languages communities would be respected if certain legislation or jurisdictions attempted to eliminate or restrict their rights. The decision to call witnesses before the Official Languages Committee was not made two minutes before the meeting began. I came through the door that you see, people were here, and I was in a good mood because we were going to study in a proper, thorough manner the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program. Now we can't do that.

I read the comments that you made to the various media. It's unfortunate, but we're in politics to make policy. If I didn't want to be part of a political party, then I would be an independent member. Whether you like it or not, there will always be some partisanship at a certain level. That is the reality in Canada.

We have the right to hold partisan opinions. That being said, the Official Languages Committee has always worked to improve the lives of our citizens and has always attempted to advance the cause that is dear to our hearts. I have been a member of this committee

since I was first elected in 2004 and I can tell you that I think that this decision was unacceptable.

● (0920)

You could have made the decision one, two or three days before the meeting, but you decided to shut things down two minutes before we were scheduled to convene, with no explanation. You could have at least given us an acceptable explanation. In saying that you thought the previous meeting had been too partisan, you clearly went too far. One has to be able to respect committee members' wishes.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Other comments?

Ms. Folco.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Mr. Chairman, I simply would like to add that we are not aware of the reasons that prompted you to cancel last Tuesday's meeting. To add insult to injury, you only made these reasons known in the evening before the cameras, while you and I were being interviewed by CBC television.

I will not speak for long on this, but I would like to point out that you gave your reasons to the media before you gave them to the committee members. You are responsible for explaining your actions to this committee's members and that is why we are here this morning.

**The Chair:** We have several motions before us, including one from Mr. Godin. As chairman, I feel uncomfortable with moving on to another item before dealing with this motion. I will therefore ask the clerk to read it.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Bélisle):** Mr. Godin, I would like to point out that you have two motions. Would you like to withdraw the first one?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The committee agrees with Mr. Godin.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I would like it to be read because I'm not sure which is which.

● (0925)

**The Clerk:** We are withdrawing the first motion?

**The Chair:** Is the committee agreed? Yes.

(The motion is withdrawn.)

**The Clerk:** I will therefore read the motion tabled by Mr. Godin, that is the second motion on the orders of the day.

Is that correct, Mr. Godin?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes.

**The Clerk:** The motion reads as follows:

That the Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Mr. Guy Lauzon, be relieved of his duties as chair following a decision made on his own accord to cancel a scheduled May 8, 2007 meeting of the Committee which was to study the issue of the Court Challenges Program. The chair acted against the will of the Committee and overstepped his role as chair. As a consequence, he has lost the confidence of the Committee.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I see that it has been printed twice.

**The Chair:** It is the second motion.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Fine, thank you.

**The Chair:** Do the committee members agree on dealing with this motion before we move on to another item?

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman. I think I said enough at the beginning of the meeting. As I stated, I have been a member of the Official Languages Committee since 1998. I hold official languages close to my heart. I would not be sitting on this committee if that were not true. I live in a community where two groups of people live side by side: anglophones and francophones. We have worked very hard over the years. New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada.

Over the past 25 years, the Official Languages Committee was never able to go and visit people in their communities. I am one of those individuals who insisted that we do so, not because I wanted to travel, because I can travel as much as I wish, but so that the committee could go into communities to see what was happening in schools, day cares and health establishments. You were one of those who said that you did not see how we could announce to our constituents that we were going to be spending money for official languages. You can't deny this: it can be checked in the minutes. We had to insist on this. We have now reached the point where the government has abolished the Court Challenges Program.

If there are French-language schools in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Ontario, it is thanks to that program. The people from Collège Boréal were proud to tell us about their challenges before the Court and the progress they made as a result. We were told the same in British Columbia. I could also talk about French-language health services throughout Canada. During our trip, there was not one place where we were not told about the harm the cancellation of this program would cause. The government said itself in the House of Commons that it would not spend money on groups that challenge its position. Imagine that!

You say that as chairman you acted of your own accord and not according to government orders. I doubt that, given what the Conservative Party whip is doing. The government publicly stated that it supports your position. You showed a lack of respect towards francophone communities and this committee. As Ms. Folco stated earlier, you did not have the courage to call us and yet you provided your reasons to the CBC's Don Newman. That is when I learned your true reasons for cancelling this committee meeting. We can't work this way. We can't trust a chairman if he goes behind our backs this way.

I also do not believe that you contacted Pablo Rodriguez, the Vice-Chair of this committee. I know for a fact that you did not contact me. I am also a vice-chair, and yet you did not warn me that you were going to be cancelling the meeting. You contacted no one. You acted of your own accord, as you say, and by your own authority. It happens that this is not the kind of authority we want to give you, that is to be able to unilaterally cancel such an important meeting.

I stated the reasons for which a chair can cancel a meeting. Perhaps you could give me others. Those that I mentioned were quite simple, for example, when witnesses do not show up because they missed their flight. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, on which I sit, has established rules for committees,

but there was never any question of allowing a person to unilaterally decide to put an end to meetings on a particular topic because of the direction of a committee was taking.

We could never have imagined that a chairman would dare to do such a thing. And who's paying the price today? Minority communities. They are the ones who wanted to come here to defend themselves and to make suggestions to us so that we could submit them to the government. That is our right, in a democracy. We have a Parliament, and we have ministers who face Question Period between 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

● (0930)

Parliamentary committees are important. Under the Official Languages Act, there must be a Standing Committee on Official Languages that tables reports to Parliament and considers official languages legislation.

I therefore have no other choice but to request that you resign. I am asking you to step down because you have lost the confidence of this committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Folco, you have the floor.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Obviously, I [*Editor's note: technical problems*]. I would like to add the following. As members of Parliament, we all travel all over the world. No matter what party you represent, people all around the world tell us how much they respect Canada because of its highly developed democracy. There is no doubt that Canada is one of the two or three most democratic countries in the world. And democracy is measured, first and foremost, by the level of democracy within a country's Parliament.

I have sat on and chaired other committees. For example, when we debated employment equity, we held that Parliament should be a model for other Canadian institutions, because, as the elected representatives of the Canadian public, Parliament is our voice. Not only is Canada a model for other less democratic countries—a matter we have discussed at length—but Parliament must also be a model for Canada. Since I began sitting on this committee, I have noticed that our progress has slowed. Take, for example, the filibuster that tied up an entire meeting. I apologize for having to use an English word—in fact, it is an American word—but I do not know the French word. That filibuster prevented us from voting on an item and making swifter progress in our discussions. That is the sort of behaviour that has slowed down—and now completely paralyzed—the work of this committee.

Obviously, some people will try to say that this is nothing but a tempest in a teapot, that it is unimportant, and that the members of the committee are getting unnecessarily worked up about what the chairman did. I however do not think that this is a tempest in a teapot. Our behaviour must always be beyond reproach. As members elected by the Canadian public, we must show respect for Canadians and carry out the work they have asked us to do.

Mr. Chairman, to my mind, by cancelling the meeting without notice and then cancelling a second meeting without explanation, you failed to live up to this responsibility. I wonder if we would even have had a meeting this morning if I had not tabled my motion. The reason I ask is that two meetings have already been cancelled without any explanation.

As members of Parliament, we have responsibilities towards the Canadian public—

● (0935)

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order.

I would like to react to Ms. Folco's allegations. If I am not mistaken, you called the meeting this morning. I therefore do not think that it was—

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I never said otherwise, Mr. Chairman.

I was imagining a hypothetical scenario, I did not say that it was a fact. I simply said that it was a possible scenario. At any rate, you received my motion well before the meeting was called. We will never know what would have happened, Mr. Harvey; but, at any rate, it is only a minor detail.

As my colleagues have said, what is important here is the lack of respect and the damage to our image in the eyes of Canadians. That is an important aspect.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Folco.

Mr. Murphy, you have the floor.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

By way of introduction, allow me to say that I have a great deal of respect for you, both as an individual and as a member of Parliament. I know that you work hard. I know that you have Canada's interest at heart and that you believe in a bilingual country. It is therefore with a heavy heart that I support this motion, but I have no choice but to do so.

This motion is not condemning you, Mr. Chairman, but your government's policy on official languages. The government no longer respects the Official Languages Act. It is this committee's responsibility to ensure that the Act is respected. This is very important to me, because I am an anglophone from New Brunswick, an officially bilingual province. When I was mayor of Moncton, the city was officially declared bilingual. That was achieved thanks to the work of this committee and thanks to the implementation of the Official Languages Act.

It is not your fault that this has happened; it is the fault of the government.

[*English*]

I'd like to add that coming as an anglophone to this committee and being accepted by you personally, and everyone here, I feel very welcome. I think the committee was working quite well when we went out west and so on.

But coming from a bilingual province and being an anglophone, coming from a bilingual city and being an anglophone, and seeing the harmony that exists because of this law and the work of committees like this, it seems a terrible shame that the government doesn't realize that this committee must keep working. Notwithstanding the allegations of politics, this committee must keep working. So I must support the motion. This committee must continue to work, and the shot over the bow for the government is that if you don't continue with the program and the aims of this law and this committee, there will be serious political consequences.

So reluctantly, Mr. Chairman, I am supporting this motion, and I do not intend it to be directed personally towards you. You're carrying the brunt of dismay for your party today, so I feel sorry for you, but I must vote for this motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Murphy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to begin by saying that we will be supporting the motion. It was not an easy decision, but out of respect for this committee and out of respect for democracy—an ideal that is of paramount importance—we have no choice. Elected representatives are given a voice that must be used to advance the society in which we all live. The committees of the House of Commons are essential fora for exercising this responsibility. Preventing us from exercising our right to speak by cancelling Tuesday's meeting and by failing to schedule a meeting on Thursday is an abuse of power.

Mr. Chairman, there is another important point that must be understood. When we were in the House of Commons for Question Period on Tuesday, I sent you a memo asking you why you had cancelled the meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. You replied that the committee was becoming too partisan, and that the Court Challenges Program was before the courts and was also being studied by the Official Languages Commissioner. By way of conclusion, you said that we would invite witnesses at a later date, when all of these questions had been resolved.

Mr. Chairman, you felt that the committee was too partisan. The Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP are part of the Canadian political landscape. There are some 15 political parties in Canada, and 4 of them have managed to get members elected. Furthermore, I would remind you that during in-camera work completed in the course of our recent trip, we attempted to produce a report in keeping with the parliamentary program.

A meeting on the Court Challenges Program was scheduled and, suddenly, you too decided to be partisan and cancel the meeting because your political party disagrees with the opposition's position on this subject. You are accusing others of what you are doing yourself—behaving in a partisan manner.

Other arguments have been advanced: the matter is before the courts; the Official Languages Commissioner is studying the program; and French and English language communities in minority settings in Quebec and Canada want to see the program reinstated. However, none of these in any way preclude the committee from studying the matter, especially since it was part of our program. It did not just appear out of nowhere.

When we visited all of Canada's French-language communities in a minority setting last fall, people told us that the program was essential. Logically, we therefore decided to put the issue on our work schedule, so that we could study it with the appropriate witnesses.

Your arguments in defence of your decision to cancel the meeting hold no water. The behaviour of the current Conservative government is indicative either of ignorance—which I do not believe to be the case—or of a lack of respect for members of minority communities, in particular French speakers—which I find all too easy to believe.

● (0940)

On September 25, 2006, the federal government decided to abolish the Court Challenges Program, as the Mulroney government had done before it—you will note that both the Mulroney and Harper governments were Conservative governments. The decision was made without any consideration for the communities' request to maintain the program. The Court Challenges Program has been used to help both the communities and society at large flourish by ensuring that their most fundamental rights are respected. In other words, the program ensured that people were able to conduct their lives in the official language of their choice at all times: be it in French outside Quebec, in English in Quebec or indeed in either language anywhere in the country.

The Court Challenges Program was also extremely useful in the struggle for schools. I am disappointed to see that some members from the region are not as tuned into the matter as they ought to be. The Montfort Hospital was a recent battle; it did not take place centuries ago. The program had to be used in the case of the Franco-Ontarian, the Franco-Saskatchewanian and the Acadian schools that were mentioned earlier, because the provincial governments and the school boards were not respecting the Constitution.

The current government told us that it was going to respect the Constitution. However, they did not stop to think that the federal government is not the only player involved here; the provincial governments have also failed to respect minority rights, even though these are rights enshrined in the Charter.

Allow me to continue. The government appointed an ombudsman for victims of crime who does not speak French. It also recently appointed a new Chairman of the National Capital Commission, who told us that, at the age of 62, he was going to start learning French out of respect for the people around him. And this, in a so-called bilingual region, recognized as such by the Canadian federal government. The failure to choose somebody able to communicate in French constitutes another affront to francophones. It was your government that made that choice.

Next we have the program for the Canadian armed forces. The government changed the entire program, not to ensure a greater respect for the Official Languages Act, by which the Department of National Defence should continue to be bound, but for other reasons. DND is not part of an independent State within the nation State, and should therefore implement and uphold mechanisms to resolve the problem that has plagued francophones in the Canadian Forces since the Official Languages Act was adopted some 39 or 40 years ago.

Given the wider context, the decision to cancel the meeting is, to my mind, indicative of a culture of disrespect for Canadian citizens, who told us that this matter required our attention. It is through debate that greater understanding is achieved. You prevented us from having this debate and from exercising one of the fundamental rights of a democracy—the right to speak and the right to be heard—thus preventing us from finding solutions to the important problem of ensuring the respect of all Canadians, whether they live in Quebec, in New Brunswick, or elsewhere in the country. We have legislation to ensure that official language minority communities are respected. The Court Challenges Program has proved to be a useful tool in many areas for French-language communities in a minority setting.

The reasons you cited earlier in no way justify your decision to prevent us from exercising this right, and you do not deserve to be the chair of this committee.

● (0945)

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand that the members of the opposition are upset, but I think that they are overreacting.

[*English*]

And to listen to them, you would think we had accomplished no work at all this past year, and yet look what we have accomplished. For the first time in 26 years, we travelled as a committee. We put together a report under your leadership, an excellent report that's been tabled in the House, and we've received compliments. I myself have received compliments on that report from people in my constituency, from more than one source.

I've lost count of the number of meetings we've had, the number of witnesses we've had appear before us.

[*Translation*]

There have been many. The committee wanted to meet the minister, and she appeared before the committee. We were even able to meet with two ministers at the same time, they were both here. We have heard from the Commissioner of Official Languages and witnesses from all around the country. We have done, and we continue to do, a lot of good work. We are here working to support the well-being of official language communities in minority settings.

The Court Challenges Program is a complex issue. We heard testimony on it during our pan-Canadian fact-finding mission. However, last week's meeting was scheduled to take place before the Commissioner of Official Languages tabled his preliminary report. Furthermore, the Court Challenges Program is before the courts. The situation is complex.



[English]

Mr. Chair, you acted within your mandate. You had to use your judgment. It's not a question of overstepping your bounds; you acted within your mandate. I understand that the opposition is upset; that's fine, but he acted within his mandate.

Monsieur Godin is the whip of his party. I wonder if he's ever had to make a leadership decision that his fellow MPs were not happy with. I wonder if they ranted and raved and asked him to resign because they didn't agree with his decision. Even though he may have acted within the bounds of his responsibilities, did they go on and on?

You have my confidence. Under your leadership we've accomplished a lot of work. What I hear today is a lot of exaggeration. One thing I want to make clear is that by voting against you, Mr. Chair, the committee will not exist. It will cease to exist, so the opposition members, in saying that they want to serve our official language communities, are in fact dissolving the committee. Ask me—

● (0950)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Folco.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

I do not understand why my Conservative colleague, Mr. Lemieux, is saying that if we vote against the chair, the committee will cease to exist. That is not the case; the rules of the House provide for the election of a new chairman. I fail to understand my colleague's point.

**The Chair:** The committee will cease to operate if I am asked to step down.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Exactly. The committee will cease to exist. The vice-chairs will no longer be the vice-chairs after the—

**The Chair:** Exactly. The committee will cease its activities.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** A point of order, please, Mr. Chairman.

I understand that this committee, in its current form under your chairmanship, will not continue. However, the rules of the House provide for an election, which means that work can go on. That is what we want; we want the work to go on.

**The Acting Chair (The Chair):** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you for your contribution to the debate, but it was not a point of order, because I was right. If the chairman steps down, this committee, in its present form, will cease to exist. We would have to strike a new committee. The opposition would be responsible for this state of affairs.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that we have done a lot of good work. My colleagues on the other side are entitled to be angry but, Mr. Chairman, your actions were in keeping with your mandate. Personally, I think we should continue our work in our present format.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lemieux.

Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** I will be very brief.

There has been a lot of talk about respect this morning. As far as I know, the right to hold in-camera meetings is a parliamentary privilege. However, information discussed in camera has been brought up publicly by Ms. Folco, the member for Laval.

**Mme Raymonde Folco:** A point of order, Mr. Chairman: we are debating the motion at the moment, a motion that was tabled by my colleague.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** That is not a point of order. I am going to continue.

People keep talking about respect. I have always shown respect for all members of this committee. We have always worked hard to promote linguistic duality and defend linguistic minorities. A lot of information that was shared in an in-camera meeting has been disclosed in statements under Standing Order 31 and in press releases. That is indicative of a lack of respect for the parliamentarians on this committee. I understand that you are angry, but respect works both ways.

You have my full support, Mr. Lauzon, because you have always shown yourself to be a consummate professional. We produced a report, and everybody worked shoulder to shoulder. You have my full support.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lemieux mentioned that the committee has heard witnesses, travelled and produced a report. I do not dispute that, but all that means is that we have done our job. Had we not done that, we would have no right to be here and would have to be replaced. We did our job as members of Parliament and as members of this committee.

The situation before us today is entirely different: the chairman overstepped his mandate by making a decision that he should not have made, and we are entirely unsatisfied with his explanation. However, the committee can still continue to operate even if there is a vote asking the chairman to step down. It is up to you to propose somebody to replace him. It is up to you to tell the communities whether, yes or no, you want the committee to continue to work.

If the committee decides that the chairman must step down, the rules, as you know, state that you have to field another candidate for the position. If you choose to do so, the committee will continue to operate; we will continue to hear witnesses; and we will continue to work for the well-being and development of all communities around the country. It is up to you. We are responsible for part of the decision, the other part is in your hands.

Should you decide not to propose another name, you will be responsible for knowingly and deliberately putting an end to the committee's work, meaning that we will no longer be here to listen to and work with the communities. The decision is in your hands. Assume your responsibilities. Do not try to put all the blame on the opposition. It is up to you.

●(0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to comment on what Mr. Lemieux just said. He said that you acted properly as chairman when you cancelled the meetings. I think that he said that. Perhaps he could clarify it further for me. He seems to be saying that a chairman can decide that an agenda is not valid even though a majority of committee members have agreed to it. No chairman has ever been given this power in any committee in which I have participated.

He referred to me as my party's whip. Let me tell you that I am very proud of the fact that the New Democratic Party is the only political party that elects its whip every year in January. I have been elected as the whip since the year 2000. This shows that caucus members respected my decisions, because they had seven opportunities to get rid of me. They could have done it seven times, Mr. Lemieux. If they say that they no longer want me, I am sure that it will not spell the end of the NDP caucus. However, your party wants to dissolve this committee. Now the decision is yours.

According to the Standing Orders, if the motion for Mr. Lauzon's resignation is adopted, it is incumbent on the government to appoint someone else to the committee. After that, you can appoint the chair of your choice. If you choose to do that, then you will be attacking the francophone minorities, as you have done during the past months. Now the decision is up to you. You will show us whether the Conservative Government of Canada intends to respect both official languages of the two peoples that came from Europe to settle in Canada in the 1600s. We have had a Constitution with two official languages since the 1800s.

It is up to you to decide and to your government to show Canadians if it respects these principles. You cannot hide behind statements like those made by Mr. Jay Hill, who claimed that this committee is not important. You cannot hide behind that and pretend that Canadians are not frustrated. You cannot hide behind that. You yourself said that this is an important committee and that we had produced a good report. You personally said that we had travelled all over Canada, from coast to coast to coast.

Now you will decide whether or not to show respect, but you will not decide whether or not the committee should continue to exist. The committee will continue existing today, and the day after that. There is no way that the Conservatives can abolish Canada's parliamentary official languages committee and deprive us of our democratic right to freedom of speech. I am sorry.

While Canada's Prime Minister may decide which of his party members can speak to the media, he cannot decide this for members of the opposition. This is not what democracy is about. My dear friends, I leave this matter in your hands.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chairman, regarding the statements that Mr. Lemieux just made, I want to emphasize that this committee

will not be dissolved even if you are no longer its chair. The committee will be suspended and will not be able to sit until it has a new chair. Both vice-chairs will keep their positions. Mr. Chairman, I'd like you to confirm what I just said, in consultation with the clerk.

●(1000)

**The Chair:** Perhaps the clerk can read out exactly what will happen next.

**The Clerk:** I am quoting from page 830 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit.

If no motion proposing a member for the position of chair is adopted, no other business can be transacted. When an impasse is evident, the members disperse and must be reconvened by the clerk at a later time, with the election of a chair remaining their first order of business.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** This applies only to the chair.

**The Clerk:** This applies only to the chair. The vice-chairs would keep their positions, but let me quote from page 829:

All of the chair's powers can be delegated to the vice-chair, but the vice-chair cannot preside over a committee meeting while the office of chair is vacant.

In any case, the vice-chairs remain in their positions.

**The Chair:** Is that all?

Mr. Harvey.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Mr. Chairman, I listened very attentively to all the comments. We have been sitting on the Standing Committee on Official Languages for more than a year. This was the first time that I sat on a committee. It was one of my first experiences. I think that the committee has done good work until recently. The Official Languages Committee travelled all over Canada to see what was happening on the ground instead of merely inviting one or two witnesses representing communities in minority situations. We didn't just visit one or two cities; we travelled for nearly three weeks.

Let us also consider the government's record. It allocated an additional \$30 million to communities in minority situations all over Canada. Let us keep in mind all the things that the committee did during the past year. To my mind, there is no justification whatsoever for this kind of motion. I also recall that about a month ago, the opposition wanted to ram through a part of the report that only made a few recommendations, because the opposition members were afraid of an imminent election and wanted to use a part of the report

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, that discussion was in camera.

**Some members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Ms. Folco, since your article was published in a newspaper, shall we agree not to let ourselves get flustered by this? Moreover, Mr. D'Amours made a statement pursuant to Standing Order 31. Therefore, let's be careful, all right?

**The Chair:** Mr. Harvey, Mr. Malo is right, we must respect the confidentiality of an in-camera meeting.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** If that's the case, then I will choose not to remember that part of it.

Mr. Chairman, all I can say is that I have full confidence in you. You have done good work, and I am sure that you will continue doing good work as chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to speak?

Mr. Chong.

[*English*]

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** I think we're going to have a problem here unless people can get their minds around the motion that's in front of us.

The logical argument that nobody can contest is that the government members on this committee have indicated support for the chair, Mr. Guy Lauzon. As government members on this committee, we do not wish to see anybody but Mr. Lauzon as chair. In other words, the four government members on this committee are not prepared to become the new chair. So we've indicated our support for the present chair, and we're not willing to change that position.

The second thing that is not contestable is that Standing Order 106 (2) states that the chair must be a government member. Therefore, if you remove this chair, Mr. Guy Lauzon, the business of this committee will stop, because the business of the committee will not continue until the issue of the chair has been settled.

We have also indicated that we are not prepared to have anybody in that chair other than Mr. Guy Lauzon. So if you vote to remove him as chair of this committee, the work of this committee will stop ad infinitum.

So that's a decision that you will take. If you don't wish to see the business of this committee continue, then vote in favour of Mr. Godin's motion, because the business of this committee will then stop. It's very simple.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1005)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chong.

Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** This will be my last intervention, because I want to go on to the vote. I just want to clarify a point.

Mr. Chong says that you have the confidence of the committee members here. In a parliamentary committee that is suppose to be independent to some degree, it is sad to hear a group saying that it is expressing its own opinion, despite what we can read in this morning's newspaper:

In an interview with Canadian Press, Mr. Hill stated that he would not replace Mr. Lauzon if the opposition forced him to leave.

**And now, regarding the government, they said the following:** All the Conservative MPs have also been instructed to refuse the position if it is offered to them.

This was taken from a Canadian Press article that was published this morning.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Does anyone else have anything to say?

Mr. Lemieux.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Yes, I'd like to summarize a few things. The first thing is that as I mentioned,

[*Translation*]

we have done a lot of good work together. You have been and you still are the chairman, and it was under your leadership that we were able to do this work. As I said, the people on the opposition side are angry, and I understand that. They would like to have a new chair, but how long will that last? Until the next time they are angry or displeased? Yes. We would be establishing a precedent whereby whenever opposition members are unhappy with a decision, they could force the chair to resign. Why not?

[*English*]

Mr. Chong has raised a valid point. If the opposition votes to remove the chair, no one here is going to take it over. Knowing that now, you are voting to terminate the work of this committee.

**An hon. member:** You are voting to terminate this committee.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** You are voting to terminate. There is no reason for Mr—

Excuse me, I have the floor. Thank you.

There is no reason—

**The Chair:** A little bit of respect, please.

Just a minute, Mr. Lemieux.

*Oui.*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I would like to remind committee members that in my colleague's motion, there is no reference to continuing the committee: it only talks about him being relieved of his duties as chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Pierre.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** The work of the committee cannot continue without a chair. That creates a problem for you since it is your motion and your vote that will determine the future of our committee. It is your responsibility.

**The Chair:** Order, please.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Something happened that made you angry. Clearly, the future of our committee depends on you and the results of the vote on the motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to speak? No. I would therefore like to make a few comments.

I thank all the members for their comments. I respect all of you and I also respect what you said, whether in support of me or not. However, I must try to explain in my own words why I made this decision and why I think as I do. I'm going to take a few minutes to do that. Some things were said about me that were hurtful. Some members made some statements without knowing all the facts, in my opinion.

● (1010)

[English]

For those of you who don't know, obviously, with a name like Guy Lauzon, I'm a francophone. I was born of two francophone parents. My mother, when she moved to Ontario, could not speak a word of English. I was born in a Scottish community called St. Andrews West, and we were the only French family in that village; they were all Scottish settlers and United Empire Loyalists. I went to school in English, my friends were English, and we spoke English in the house because my mother had to learn to speak English, and used to say,

[Translation]

"Talk to me in English: I have to learn how to speak it."

[English]

When people say that I don't support minority communities, I'm going to look each and every one of you in the eye and I'm going to say, you don't know what you're talking about: I lived it; I lived what it is.

Finally, when I was elected three years ago and became a member, I was asked by the leader of the official opposition at that time to sit on the committee. It was my first exposure to official languages.

[Translation]

That is when I renewed my contact with my roots.

[English]

I finally discovered who I was and where I came from: I was a francophone. I used to be called Guy Lawson.

[Translation]

It is true: I was not Guy Lauzon, I was Guy Lawson.

[English]

I know what it is, and I take great offence when you people, anyone, mentions that I don't have the official languages committee at heart. I believe in this committee more strongly than any one of you can possibly believe. I mean that from the bottom of my heart.

Yes, I made a decision, and I'll tell you why I made a decision. We made a decision here as a committee, about three weeks ago, every one of us—every one of us—and the official languages in this country lost because of our decision. We got Hockey Canada to come here, and we dealt with something that in my mind, as chairman, I didn't agree with, but I allowed it to happen. Okay? And we got the results.

I've heard from some of you around this table and I've heard from some of your colleagues about what the public out there thought, how we went against what we were trying to do to promote official languages.

Mr. Godin, you accused me, or you said that at one time I said I would have a hard time explaining to my constituents about the money we were spending, a quarter of a million dollars to go on a— If you recall, I was the person who went to the Liaison Committee and lobbied very, very hard when they wanted to refuse it. And you were there.

● (1015)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That was only the second time.

**The Chair:** That's right, but you were there. You were a witness to that. And I think you'll agree that if I hadn't lobbied as hard as I did, we probably wouldn't have got that money. I promoted this voyage.

Here's a report we have that I submitted last Wednesday, and nobody, but nobody, ever asked me a word about it—not a reporter. All they're asking about is whatever's going on at the committee—not this work that went on, incredible work. We worked as a committee, when we were in camera; how well we worked, and we got this report finalized, something that I'm very, very proud of. I don't know the last time a report like this was put together, and that's thanks to you people. I was part of that. I was able to be the chair during that.

Yes, I made a decision, and I made a decision because I thought I was making the right decision. You can tell me I didn't make the right decision, and that's your right, and I'm prepared to take that. If it's necessary to be removed from this committee, I'm prepared to do that. The one mistake I think I made, I'm going to tell you, because I didn't think—

And whether I'm the chair or whether someone else is the chair, I don't want this committee to be used as an instrument to play political games. That's what I don't want. I mean the committee. You can play games, but not the committee. It shouldn't be used. It's too important. And here's the proof that it's important. Canadians from coast to coast to coast said something in here, because of this official languages committee.

Right or wrong—and you can disagree with me on the decision—I took the decision at a quarter to eight last Tuesday morning, and I phoned the clerk at a quarter to eight. I realize some of you only got that information at ten to nine, and you know what—

**An hon. member:** Two minutes to nine.

**The Chair:** Two minutes to nine. As I sit here, I can tell you the decision was taken for the right reasons.

Unfortunately, if I had to do it over again, yes, I would make the decision a lot earlier. But six months or six years from now, I still think that we will have done what we should do for the official languages committee. This is what we have to do.

We've got 72% of Canadians who agree we should have a bilingual country—72%. Wouldn't it be nice if we could get it to 82% as a result of the work of this committee?

I want to continue as the chair of this committee. I think we've done wonderful work. You're not very easy to get along with, some of you, and by and large, I think I've tried my best. Yes, I can tell you the opposition isn't any easier to get along with...or the government side. We've had personalities on both sides. I've tried to be fair, I really have. And I want to continue to be fair. I want to continue to do good work.

One of the opposition members or one of the government members said I was angry. I take the blame for that, because I should have told you long before that, and I apologize for that. But the truth of the matter is that I was doing it for the good of official languages in this country.

If you chose to remove me as your chair, that's your prerogative, because—you know what?—in the final analysis, the committee is master of its own destiny.

Thank you.

Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would like to comment on some of the things that were said about me.

For example, you said you went to bat for the committee's right to travel. But we have to put things into some perspective. First, before the new Conservative government came to power, I had to go and meet with the House leaders and tell them that if the Official Languages Committee did not travel across Canada, no other committee would be able to travel. In fact, I told them that we would use our veto to prevent all committees from travelling. Because of the election, the committee didn't travel.

When there was a new request to travel, the same thing happened. You know that the same thing happened, Mr. Lauzon. You cannot say otherwise. You went to bat for the committee, and because the government saw that there was no way out, it agreed to our trip. But it was opposed to the committee travelling, it did not want that to happen, because it was not that important for official languages. When you went to bat for us at the liaison committee, I was there too, I'm sure you will remember. Do you recall that I was there with you? Do you remember all the arguments I put forward? Thank you.

When the issue regarding the ombudsman for victims of crime came up and I went to tell you, as chair of the committee, that it was incredible for the government to appoint a unilingual person to this position, you asked me whether I was suggesting that anglophones could not do the job. Do you remember that, Mr. Lauzon?

**The Chair:** Yes, I do remember that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So I am wondering what you are thinking, as chair of the Official Languages Committee, when you tell us stories like the one you just told us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Folco.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I would like to call for the vote.

**The Chair:** Do you have something to say, Mr. Murphy?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Just briefly, I understand your apology, and we don't sit in judgment of you. But the voters sit in judgment of us, I guess. Sometimes the media can package, distort, grow, or otherwise play a story.

I haven't heard from you, however, about why you think it was right for you to cancel the meeting. You haven't really said here why you cancelled the meeting. You apologized for the late notice, and with great respect, I accept that apology. But why did you cancel the meeting?

**The Chair:** I can certainly explain that, and I did explain it.

There again, you might not agree with my reasons. But as I saw what happened with Hockey Canada, whether you agree with it or not, I felt that the committee was used in that incident for the wrong reasons. I also thought that the meeting I cancelled was going to be used for the wrong reason.

We had a situation where this was before the courts. We had public servants coming who really couldn't say a whole lot. We had the commissioner, who was coming out within days with a report. Someone along the line said that I cancelled because I didn't want to talk about the court challenges program. That wasn't the case at all. I never, ever said that. What I said is that the court challenges program would be dealt with, but I thought the timing would be better when we had the commissioner's report and when the court case was resolved, so that people could speak freely.

Those were my reasons. I seriously thought the committee, on this issue, was going to be used to play political games. Those are my reasons. Whether they're acceptable or not, that's what they were.

By the way, I'm prepared to answer any other question. This was a decision that I made with the best of intentions. I do apologize for the timing of it, but the decision was taken in good faith.

Pierre Lemieux.

• (1020)

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** When we vote,

[*Translation*]

I would like it to be a recorded vote.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. It's a recorded vote.

Do we have to read the motion again?

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk:** The motion reads as follows:

That the Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Mr. Guy Lauzon, be relieved of his duties as Chair following a decision made on his own accord to cancel the scheduled May 8, 2007 meeting of the Committee which was to study the issue of the Court Challenges Program; therefore, the Chair acted against the will of the committee and overstepped his role as chair and as a consequence, he has lost the confidence of the Committee.

**The Chair:** Do we have a seconder for the motion?

**The Clerk:** Since this is a recorded vote, I will read off members' names.

(The motion is carried, 7 to 4.)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** The motion is carried. Consequently, the meeting is over.

**The Clerk:** No.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Madam Clerk, we would ask to move to the next motion regarding the appointment of a new chair for this committee.

**The Clerk:** I'm going to ask if there are any formal motions.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** This meeting is over. Another meeting will have to be called. We need more information. Can we suspend the meeting for two minutes? I'm going to get some information. I believe I am right.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I would prefer that you do not suspend the meeting, sir. You can go and get the information, we will wait. There is no problem with that.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I apologize, I made another mistake.

• (1025)

**The Clerk:** Honourable members of the committee, since we have quorum, we can proceed with election of a chair.

I am ready to receive motions for the position of chairman.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Madam Clerk, I move that Mr. Chong be chair of the committee.

[*English*]

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I decline the nomination.

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I nominate Luc Harvey, Madam Clerk.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Thank you for thinking of me, Ms. Folco, but unfortunately I must decline.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I nominate Mr. Lemieux, Madam Clerk.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I'm touched that I'm third on the list. Thank you very much, but I have a great deal of confidence in Mr. Lauzon. So I must decline, thank you.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Madam Clerk, I nominate Ms. Boucher as chair of the committee.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** That is brilliant on Mr. D'Amours' part, particularly, since I am the last the list. Since I am very fond of you, I will decline.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Clerk, I would have liked to move that Ms. Boucher be chair of the committee, but it is against my principles to have a parliamentary secretary chair a committee. That is why I did not nominate her.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other nominations?

As clerk, all I can do is receive motions for the election of the chair. I cannot receive any other motion, I cannot hear any points of order and I cannot take part in your debates. I need motions for the election of the chair.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I would just like to say that we cannot nominate anyone else as chair, because no one else is eligible.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** May I ask that this meeting be adjourned, Madam Clerk?

**The Clerk:** I have no power to adjourn the meeting, and there is no chair.









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