

Routine Proceedings

Furthermore, this process—and this was stressed by witnesses who appeared before the committee—must also include recognition of the five proposals made by Quebec.

[*English*]

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the committee who participated in this very difficult task. It is my information that we are probably the parliamentary committee that has travelled the most, heard the most witnesses, and received the most written submissions in the shortest period of time ever. Also, it was a first for the House of Commons to have one of its committees' activities and hearings televised as it travelled all through Canada.

If there is one thing out of this experience that all members of the committee feel very strongly, it is that it was an opportunity for us to learn from each other and to learn from other Canadians.

I also want to thank the staff who supported us in this work and who went well beyond the call of duty in helping this committee and the Parliament of Canada to accomplish its work.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charest: Finally, Mr. Speaker, the report is unanimous.

[*Editor's note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

[*English*]

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that there is unanimous consent to permit a representative from each of the opposition parties to make a statement matching the statement made by the chairman.

Mr. Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have been able to work on this committee and, like the chairman, I am happy that we were able to produce an unanimous report.

We were rushed by our timetable and our fellow Canadians did not have as much of an opportunity to prepare themselves or to appear in front of us as they deserved. On the other hand, I want to acknowledge that

we heard a wide cross-section of views covering the waterfront, that no views were excluded, and that we were honoured to have appear before us a number of premiers of the provinces of Canada.

The strongest message that we got in our travels across the country is that the Canadian people want their political leaders to take them through this impasse. The unanimous report is motivated by that strong message.

Why were we called into existence? In the opinion of the opposition, we were called into existence as a committee because of a tactic imposed three years ago by the Prime Minister, against the wishes of the opposition, which prevented real public discussion and input until now.

Some people want to say that what has happened over the past three years can be interpreted—

Mr. Speaker: I know there is consent for a response to the hon. member for Sherbrooke. I am just wondering where this response is taking us. I am concerned about it turning into a debate on matters extraneous to the immediate filing of the unanimous committee report.

I would ask the hon. member to keep that in mind. I would hope that we would not meet with points of order at this point at such a moment in our country. I would ask the hon. member to try to confine his remarks to the committee and to the report that the committee has filed. I do not think it is appropriate to get into a long debate about things that may or may not have happened many months ago.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, I would prefer not to make a statement at this time if I will be denied the opportunity to make a statement equal in length to that of the chairman, giving the views of the official opposition on this occasion.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérin: Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification. I understand that today, members have a chance to comment briefly on the tabling of the report. This was agreed to earlier by the House. Am I right? My point is, Mr. Speaker, that if a member other than the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Charest) is allowed to state his views, be it ever so briefly, on the report or the tabling of the report in the House, this automatically