



WHIP EN CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION
CHIEF OPPOSITION WHIP

Hon. Gordon O'Connor, MP, PC
Chief Government Whip
House of Commons
Centre Block, Room 215-S
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

February 10, 2010

Dear Minister O'Connor:

I write in response to your email last Wednesday evening, which I received after the subject matter had been released to the news media. You proposed that Parliament should sit through the constituency weeks scheduled from March 15 to 19 and from April 12 to 16, 2010.

That request begs the question: Why does this issue exist? Why are we not sitting right now, as scheduled?

As you know, while members of the government have been absent from Ottawa since January 25th, the date Parliament was originally scheduled to resume in this New Year, members of the Liberal Official Opposition have been fully available and ready to deal with the nation's business. We remain so.

Unlike the government, the challenging issues confronting Canadians have not been prorogued from December to March. Canadians are disappointed that their Parliament has been prohibited from functioning through this period.

Liberal MPs and Senators, however, have been very busy at work on Parliament Hill. Prime Minister Harper may have shut down Parliament, but we reported for work on January 25th, and have been working hard ever since. Indeed, in public meeting rooms packed with interested Canadians, we have tackled the following concerns:

- January 25 – Jobs Roundtable including panels on Manufacturing, Natural Resources and Youth Employment
- January 26 – Forum on Governance – Independence of Arms-length Government Agencies



- January 26 – Meeting of the Liberal Water Caucus (discussed the impact of mining tailings on Canada's lakes)
- January 27 – Forum on Women's Issues
- January 28 – Veterans' Affairs Roundtable
- January 29 – Roundtable on Alzheimer's and Dementia
- January 29 – Virtual Town Hall Meeting on Health Goals for Canada
- February 1 – Poverty and Homelessness Roundtable
- February 2 – International Development Roundtable
- February 3 – Afghanistan All-Party Committee Meeting on Detainee Issues
- February 3 – White Collar Crime Roundtable
- February 4 – Community Safety Roundtable
- February 4 – Environment Roundtable
- February 4 – Forum on Trade and Export Opportunities for Canadian Small-and-Medium Enterprises in China
- February 5 – Roundtable on Rural and Agricultural Issues (in Guelph, ON)
- February 8 – Lifelong Learning Roundtable
- February 8 – Roundtable on the Future of Healthcare
- February 9 – Roundtable on Consular Affairs and the Rights of Canadians Abroad
- February 9 – Roundtable on Medical Isotopes
- February 10 – Afghanistan All-Party Committee Meeting on Detainee Issues
- February 10 – Northern Issues Roundtable
- February 10 – Aviation Security Roundtable
- February 11 – Digital Economy Roundtable
- February 11 – Infrastructure Jobs Roundtable

As you concede, the government's prorogation has thrown the Parliamentary calendar for this winter/spring into disarray -- especially taking into account the necessity of dealing with Interim Supply and the Estimates before the end of March. As you know, our Leader, Michael Ignatieff has already agreed to these extra sitting days; in fact he suggested that you not wait until March, but return Parliament to work immediately. So our support in working through break weeks is not at issue. However, to repair some of the damage you have caused and give effect to your request, you will need to present the appropriate Motion to amend the calendar. It would be useful to circulate a draft well in advance of March 3rd.

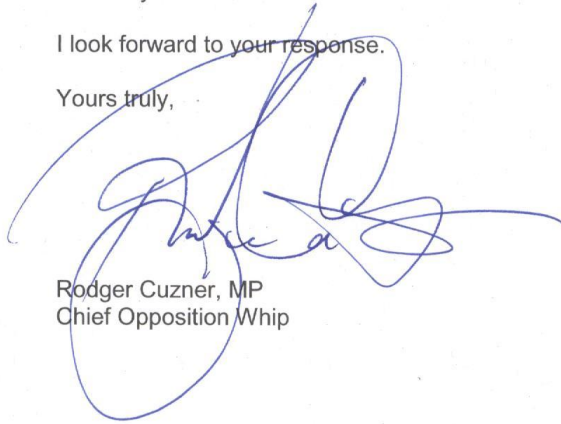
In addition to the additional sitting-days, your Motion should take into account:

- The urgent reconstitution of all committees within the first three sitting days so they will have the time needed to deal properly with the Estimates;

- A guarantee that all Ministers will be fully available whenever requested by the committees to appear on their Estimates;
- The designation of four Supply Days during March as required by the Standing Orders;
- The immediate reconstitution of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan; and
- The need for an Order to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to deal with the outstanding Question of Privilege raised before Christmas by the Hon. Irwin Cotler.

I look forward to your response.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rodger Cuzner", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left and bottom.

Rodger Cuzner, MP
Chief Opposition Whip