

Business of the House

As an alternative, the Government could use its spending power, as I mentioned earlier. Now, the Prime Minister stated he had or would make offers to the province, but we are in the dark as to what is going on, as to what those offers are. We do not know who is involved and at what level. However, since it is a direct administrative responsibility of the Government to financially help provinces to honour their Constitutional obligations, I think that it would be in this House's interest to know those objectives.

Finally, I think an emergency debate must be held because we are told that the province is going to pass the Bill as quickly as possible, probably before the weekend. That will make the situation almost impossible to change. Therefore, we must act quickly to prevent such a situation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in the power of persuasion, I believe in the respect Canadians have for their Parliament. I believe that democracy is deeply rooted in the heart of citizens. That is why we must hold an emergency debate, because it will allow all voices to be heard.

It would not only be the Prime Minister's power of persuasion but the elected Hon. Members of this House calling on their fellow citizens' common sense, finer feelings and generosity.

Mr. Speaker, I would like us to seriously and thoroughly debate that issue tonight in this democratic forum.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) has made the same request yesterday. Having given much consideration and attention to it, and under the circumstances, I decided yesterday that it would not be appropriate to hold an emergency debate on that matter, and I do not think the situation is any different today. I know that this issue is most important for both Francophone and Anglophone minorities in Canada as well as for the country's unity, but I must repeat today that an emergency debate would not be appropriate under our Standing Order. I want to assure again the Hon. Member that this issue is very important to the House of Commons and to all Canadians. And I thank him for addressing it.

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● (1510)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the House Leaders and I think you will find that there is agreement to revert to Statements by Ministers in order to

permit the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) to make a statement and for the opposition spokespersons to respond.

I also believe that within the context of that agreement it is also understood that the hour of the adjournment of the House will not be extended under Standing Order 19.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that there have been such consultations. Quite frankly, after the conduct of the Government this morning with respect to the statement on the privatization of Air Canada, our first inclination was that the Government did not deserve to be allowed to depart from the ordinary rules of the House and to be given permission to give a statement other than during the time set for it.

However, we noted that the subject matter of the statement to be given dealt with the issue of the Turkish claimants, and the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) did find it possible to provide us with copies of that statement in both French and English well before the time she wanted to give the statement. It is not clear why it was possible for that to be done on the part of the Minister of Employment and Immigration and not possible for the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski). It is another example of the complete bungling and confusion when it comes to the handling of the business of the House.

In any event, under the circumstances and particularly in light of the subject matter of the statement, we are prepared to give unanimous consent to allow her to give the statement at this time, provided that the House will adjourn at the ordinary time of adjournment and the sitting not be extended by virtue of the time the Minister will take for her statement.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, indeed there were positive discussions between the House Leaders earlier today. I want to use this occasion to thank the Minister in her new portfolio for giving us the courtesy as opposition spokespersons of having an indication of her comments well in advance, in both official languages. It is a very appropriate and thoughtful initiative.

It was that which encouraged us to agree unanimously to revert to Statements by Ministers to hear her comments and allow the spokespersons of the opposition Parties to respond.

Let me take this opportunity to say that it is quite in contrast to the bungling process we saw earlier today with respect to the proceeding dealing with the Government selling off Air Canada to private interests. However, we are enthusiastic in terms of supporting the Minister in her comments regarding the Turkish claimants who are in town today.