

Canadians feel about the Prime Minister and about this government.

I wish the government would do some rethinking because this place is very important, in fact this is the highest court in the land. This is really the place where the decisions should be made and this is where the voices of Canadians should be heard.

In my final words, I would love to hear the Conservatives stand up and defend this motion. I am prepared to stay here until the bells have to ring at eleven o'clock. I would be more than happy to hear what they say. I want to hear their defence of this motion, but I doubt whether they will be speaking. I wish they would withdraw this motion.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I usually begin my debate by saying how pleased I am to rise and address the motion before the House, but in this case the pleasure I would ordinarily take is less than normal here.

As I have watched and listened to the debate this evening, I have taken note of the absence of participation in the debate by members opposite. I am not suggesting that there are not members opposite, there are lots of them, but over the last couple of years, having had an opportunity to work with a lot of the members on the government side, I have a feeling, in fact I think I know, that they are a little cautious about participating in this debate tonight because I do not think any one of them can really articulate the reason why their government wishes to proceed in the way it is this evening. There is a feeling there, I can feel it on this side of the House, amidst all of the rhetoric that they are a little bashful about this. They may even be a little sad about it. But I would like to remind the House of six or seven lines from Beauchesne's, which may have been referred to earlier in debate, and I am sure members have read it all before. It is on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1. It is the first thing you read in Beauchesne's.

The paragraph recites what for all parliamentarians are the principles of parliamentary law. I know we have all heard it but I cannot get through my remarks without putting this on the record one more time. I know, Mr. Speaker, you have heard this many, many times. However, this particular paragraph articulates the principles of

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parliamentary law. I will just read it very quickly. The principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have always been kept steadily in view by the Canadian Parliament. These are:

To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner—

There are two other items, but I cannot help but note that the cardinal, number one principle of parliamentary law, that I read when I first came to this place, "to protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority" is precisely the principle that is at stake here tonight. To be technically more precise, it is probably the issue that was at stake when the motion was first put and its propriety was debated here in the House.

I have to say respectfully that I am really in doubt as to whether or not the way the process was handled was really in the best interests of Parliament. I know the Speaker has made a ruling. I know that I and my colleagues are not in a position to challenge that ruling, but I really have a fear that something is out of order. What has happened here is that the government has proceeded in a way that I feel breaches that fundamental principle. It is one of three or four principles, all we have in this House to protect the minority—the rules and the principles. What is happening here tonight clearly breaches, tramples that first principle.

When Parliament set up shop here 123 years ago, it adopted a concept that had been in being for many years before that. I mentioned it before here in the House and others have. The process goes back to the year 1215 when the 25 bold barons went to the king and said: "I am sorry, you may not proceed in this manner any more without the approval of our group".

That group eventually became Parliament. Over time, the king developed his court and his councillors. The living modern vestige of those counsellors is today's Privy Council, the Privy Councillors, the king or queen's councillors, who sit in this House today.

I have believed for months now that the king's councillors who sit in this place have a very special role in this place. One of the things they do not do is tell Parliament what to do. They lead the government here but they don't act for the king here. They cannot do that because