

The Constitution

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what I said. That is a guarantee I have given. The numbers will be about half what they are at this time. Already an erosion had begun to take place because of the elimination of the Rapidex system. However, I have used the historical figures of 40 in one case and 50 in another to establish the present level of employment.

CN EXPRESS—REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE OF MAINTENANCE OF SERVICE

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. When is he going to take some positive steps to reassure people in the Atlantic region that the erosion, to which my colleague referred, is not going to continue, in the sense that he knows that more and more goods are being shipped directly from Quebec to Newfoundland, thereby weakening the viability of the mainline through the maritimes? He knows there are rail line abandonment hearings scheduled to be heard by the CTC. When will the minister make some public statement that will assure people in the Atlantic region that the obligation for CN to maintain a national service is going to be maintained? Can the minister indicate the reason, the logic, in truncating these services? Why not keep the Stellarton office open, which is in a major industrial area?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I cannot prevent events from taking place. I cannot perform miracles.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McDermid: Nobody else over there can either.

Mr. Pepin: One thing I am trying to do is to take an approach to transportation in the Atlantic region which will be a constructive one. I have already had a number of discussions with ministers of transport in the Atlantic area. As a matter of fact, I had one yesterday with the minister from New Brunswick. In these discussions I have been trying to convince the ministers that we should take a global approach to transportation problems in the maritime provinces. That would mean a multimodal approach. It would mean the establishment of an envelope under which the federal government would commit itself to at least the level of subsidy that exists now. It would mean the establishment of trade-offs between one mode and the other. I am working very hard on that and with, I think, coming successes.

Mr. MacKay: Madam Speaker, could I just ask the minister this. Does he still hold to the policy that transportation is an essential tool of regional development, as was stated by the Speaker of the Senate when he held the minister's portfolio and as was stated by the hon. member for Vegreville when he was minister of transport? Will he assure the House that he still believes that transportation is essential and still has an essential place in regional development policies in this country?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, I do.

● (1500)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Pinard: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. After consultations with my colleagues on both sides, I am glad to report that we had two very fruitful meetings yesterday and that we came to some agreement on three important matters. I will deal with two of them today, and with the third one tomorrow afternoon.

First, we had discussions about the bill now under consideration, Bill C-54. We agreed to the following House order which I will read and which, I assume, will receive the unanimous consent of this House. I move:

That during consideration this day in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-54, an act to amend the statute law relating to income tax, a minister shall propose an amendment to Clause 8 of the said bill relating to the Small Business Development Bond; and

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, not later than 6 p.m. this day, every question necessary for the disposal of the Committee of the Whole stage, the report stage and the third reading and passage stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment, before the House adjourns.

Mr. Nielsen: That is acceptable, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, Madam Speaker, this motion is as the result of discussions to which we agreed. We welcome the proposed amendment regarding the Small Business Development Bond.

Madam Speaker: The House has heard the proposal by the President of the Privy Council. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: It is so ordered.

Mr. Pinard: Tomorrow at three o'clock, we will deal with Bill C-24. Tomorrow we will talk about the agreement we have reached regarding that bill. It will not take the full day. After dealing with all stages of Bill C-24, we will resume second reading stage debate on the borrowing authority bill.

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SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): The second point I would like to deal with today, Madam Speaker, concerns the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution. We had fruitful discussions on this item as well. I am happy to report that the spirit of our discussions was to the effect that this was in fact the ultimate and last request for an extension of the deadline of that committee. The following motion will be agreed to without debate. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen):