

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 8, 1961

The house met at 11 a.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

SUSPENSION OF SATURDAY SITTINGS FOR
TWO WEEKS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the house is aware, on May 8, 1961, as reported at page 4494 of *Hansard*, I made a motion with regard to the extended sittings of the house, as follows:

That on Saturday, May 13, 1961, and every Saturday thereafter until the end of the session the order of business and procedure shall be as for Thursday, a government day.

I think there has been general agreement that a continuation for the next two weeks, in any event, of Saturday sittings would not be necessary. We have to think of the welfare of those connected with the administration of the house. Discussions have taken place among representatives of the government, the opposition and the third party in this matter, and I am very happy to say that an agreement has been arrived at.

We are now dealing with a most important matter, the question of external affairs, to be followed by the estimates of defence, and the house has shown an anxiety and a desire to proceed with these two very important matters without delay. Under normal circumstances on Monday and Tuesday there would be a motion to go into supply in order to open up the other four departments that have not yet been opened up. There has been agreement that the motion will be made and the departments will be opened up on Monday without debate, thereby enabling the house to proceed unbrokenly with the business before us, which concerns all of us. The attention paid by hon. members of the house and the manner in which the debate was conducted yesterday indicate the desire of all to do everything possible to meet the situation that we face.

In view of that agreement with respect to going into supply I move, seconded by Mr. Churchill:

That the operation of the provision of the resolution adopted by the house on April 24 last concerning Saturday sittings, which reads as follows: "Saturday: 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.; 2.30 to 6.00 p.m." be suspended for the next two Saturday

sittings and that when the house adjourns today and on Friday next it shall stand adjourned until the following Monday at eleven o'clock a.m.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the procedure which the Prime Minister has outlined and the motion which has just been put to the house is quite agreeable to us. Indeed, it has been the subject of discussion among all parties in the house. The reading of the motion, Mr. Speaker, reminds us that it was as far back as April 24 when we changed our rules to permit these long hours, including Saturdays, and that in turn reminds us that during this time the house was sitting, the staff and officials who serve the house have been working under very great pressure indeed, and very effectively in spite of the pressure.

I think, among other things, this motion will serve to relieve that pressure. In the terms in which it has been put before the house it will not, I think, slow up or postpone any of our deliberations. Perhaps, by giving us a little more time on Saturday, if we are not engaged in other activities on Saturday afternoons, it will permit us to prepare for the debates in the subsequent week. We are entirely in favour of it.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): The members of this group wholeheartedly support the proposal made by the Prime Minister for this change in our procedure at the present time. We believe it will do something toward promoting the efficiency of parliament by giving members a little more time to do the things that are necessary. We believe it indicates some rather belated consideration of the staff, and it will also be to the welfare of the gentlemen and others who are members of the fourth estate.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the further matter mentioned by the Prime Minister might be made the subject of a unanimous order at this time so there will be no uncertainty on Monday when the sixth supply motion is called. I understand that the house is prepared to order that when the sixth supply motion is called on Monday next it shall be disposed of without amendment or debate.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.