If another question is posed in other circumstances, I might again point out to the House that that question could perhaps be more properly addressed to another minister. However, that does not preclude a certain minister from rising in his seat to answer the question. For the time being, we cannot come back to this question because question period has concluded.

I will hear the Minister of the Environment, but only on a point of order; I will not allow him to answer the question.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): I understand, Madam Speaker. If I have caused any problem, I am sorry to have done so. I had no particular desire to answer the question, but I would have been quite happy and prepared to respond to it, as a matter of politeness to the hon. member opposite. There is really no need for me to do so since one of my colleagues gave the answer. However, if someone else wants to pose another question at some other time, I would be happy to hear it and possibly respond in a way which might be helpful.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, when the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition began the exchange a while go, he referred to it as having started under the heading of House business. I had assumed that somewhere in that exchange the usual Thursday questions would be asked. I do not wish to jump ahead of my friend, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Go ahead!

Mr. Knowles: You are very kind.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You are standing, so go ahead.

Mr. Knowles: May I ask the government House leader if he can tell us what the government plans for business today, if we get there? At the same time may I make the plea, despite the fact that agreement did not seem to get reached earlier this afternoon on how we handle the Constitution, that we have further meetings of House leaders to see if we can resolve the one or two points of difference which still stand?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I think we will have some relief today, if the opposition has been sincere, and I think it has been. We will not deal with the motion to allocate time to the debate on the Constitution today, so I suppose there will then be no problem and no delaying tactics. What I propose to do—and I mentioned this earlier to my colleague, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton—is to deal with a motion in the name of the Minister of State for Finance to allocate time to the debate on the borrowing authority bill. Since less than two hours remain to debate that motion, it is possible that it will be voted on before the end of the day and we will have to deal with something else.

I say now publicly that we will not deal with the motion to limit time on the Constitution debate, but instead we will deal with the borrowing authority bill after the motion to limit time for debate on that bill has been voted on. That is the only item on the program today. We will deal with that very important motion on a very urgent bill which should have been passed by both Houses yesterday but is still pending because of the delays we have faced within the last days.

Since hon. members of the opposition have been saying all along that if another item of business is brought under the order of the day they would then show their seriousness and let it proceed, I am publicly saying that that is fine. Today we will not deal with the motion to allocate time on the Constitution. We will deal merely with the motion on borrowing authority and the bill itself.

• (1530)

In so far as the business for tomorrow and next week is concerned, obviously it would have been much easier to establish the order of business if we had concluded an agreement as suggested by the Leader of the New Democratic Party; but if I understood the Leader of the Opposition, he rejected the offer made by the Leader of the NDP.

Consequently, I think we will have to wait and see when the motion is voted on today and when there is an order of the House allocating two days to deal with the borrowing authority bill. I am prepared to discuss with the House leaders having the report stage tomorrow, for example, assuming that a vote is taken today and that part of the debate proceeds after that vote on the borrowing authority bill. I am prepared to discuss a proposal that the report stage of the borrowing authority bill proceed tomorrow. If there is a vote, we could agree to postpone it to next week. I am even prepared to discuss a proposal that the bill be read a third time Monday, assuming always that there is a vote today to limit the debate to two days.

If hon. members opposite are sincere, we will face no hijacking for the next three days and will make progress on a very urgent and important item of business.

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader would also answer my question about further House leaders' meetings on the issue of the Constitution debate. Even though the differences today might have been rather sharp, their number is only one or two. Since we do want to get out of the impasse and get on, a further meeting might be useful.

Mr. Pinard: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to meet with my colleagues. That seems to be a constructive suggestion. If it suits my colleague the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, I am willing to have that meeting in 15 minutes in my office.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I am always happy to meet in House leaders' meetings with my colleagues in the hope that we can make some progress.