

Sports Pool Corporation

What it has done will become more evident not only as this debate unfolds but as the days unfold. There were some very interesting means taken to get back in. While today I do not have the liberty to expose that, the method that was used by the former government to circumvent Parliament, and to circumvent federal-provincial agreements, in order to get back into a field that it saw to be lucrative will become evident. The manner in which that government did it was wrong, Mr. Speaker. I say to Hon. Members opposite that the reason it failed was because they began with the wrong premise, quite apart from whether we agree on lotteries or not.

● (1210)

I suggest that Hon. Members be very careful when they take a look at what was done. Suffice it to say that the federal Government got back into the lottery gaming field by saying that it was not a lottery. However, we find it very interesting to note that it was not to be seen as a lottery but was to have the same effect as a lottery. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, that is not a method that is acceptable to us.

Another controversy developed during that period of time. The question came up as to whether or not the \$200 million commitment that was made to the organizing committee for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics would still be in place if the Government got out of the sports pool or if the pool did not make any money. The Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport will go into this in greater detail today, but the Prime Minister has said that that commitment stands. That commitment will be honoured by the Government of Canada because it was made on the same basis as the commitment that was made in 1972 to the Montreal Olympics. An Olympic committee cannot go before the International Olympic Committee without a letter of approval from the Government of the proposed host country, so that project was a legitimate project and a commitment was made. We were not going to use the success or failure of the lottery as a criterion upon which that \$200 million commitment would stand.

I could go into further detail about the steps that the former government took. Suffice it to say that the proposal of the former government has met with absolute failure. We opposed that proposal. However, how deep is that failure?

Some Hon. Members might wonder why the Minister of National Health and Welfare is proposing this Bill today. As a Private Member, I took a very strong position against the lottery. Perhaps some Hon. Members are wondering whether or not it is a personal matter. The reason it is being put forward by me is that under the terms of the Financial Administration Act, that is the legal means by which it must be done.

What has happened to the Sports Pool Corporation? I have already said that the Sports Pool Corporation lost money. It was losing money at an average of \$1 million to \$1.5 million per week during the time of its existence. Once the accounts are settled, we will see that it has lost about \$46 million.

The argument was made that proceeds from the pool would be used for amateur sport. To legitimize the proposal, it was

even said that the proceeds from the sports pool would be used for medical research. As a Private Member, I had the opportunity to ask the chairman of the Medical Research Council when he last appeared before the standing committee how much money his people had received from the Sports Pool Corporation for medical research. Do you know what his answer was, Mr. Speaker? It was zero, nothing. I asked him another question. Because medical research funding requires long-term projections, I asked him how much he had budgeted over the next five years or so for moneys that he was to receive from the Sports Pool Corporation. Do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? He said "Nothing". I asked him if he ever expected to receive any money from the Sports Pool Corporation for medical research, because that provision was in the legislation that we passed and was one of its objectives. From the look on his face, I simply did not need an answer at all.

To date, the Sports Pool Corporation has lost an average of between \$1 million and \$1.5 million per week. It spent \$10.5 million for start-up funding. It received a loan of \$20 million from the federal Government to keep it solvent. That money is gone. The corporation has lawsuits pending against it and provincial governments are in strong opposition to it. I say to Hon. Members opposite that its objectives were to fund medical research, to help our amateur athletes who need help and to help fund, in part or in whole, the \$200 million commitment to the Calgary Olympic organizing committee. Those commitments still exist and need to be met. As well, what could we have done with that \$46 million to help those three causes? The point is that we are \$46 million further behind than we would have been if we had never seen the Sports Pool Corporation. That is the reason this legislation is before us.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that Loto Canada was to be wound up. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a Minister of the Crown in 1979 you had done so. We now find out that, through Orders in Council, it has not been done. That is why this legislation is more than just an attempt to end the Sports Pool Corporation. It is more than an attempt to end Loto Canada. It is a symbol made by our Government to the people of Canada that we do not feel that the federal Government should be in the gaming business, that the federal Government should not be in the lottery business and that when we sign agreements with the provinces, those agreements must be maintained, respected and honoured.

If projects are proposed which are legitimate, worth-while and supported by the Canadian people, we will fund those projects through the proper means here on the floor of the House of Commons rather than through lottery legislation which the Liberal Government tried twice to put through. The Liberal Government tried by some magic to colour the vision of Canadians so that they would see that the lottery business is painless, that it does not affect them and that it is simply a matter of doing business. We are debating a symbol today, Mr. Speaker.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all Members of the House that the timing of this legislation is obvious. Its purpose is