

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 24, 1995

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-7, an act to accelerate the use of alternative fuels for motor vehicles.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-263, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and other acts in consequence thereof (exempted crown corporations) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That notwithstanding any order of this House, any recorded division to be taken on Bill C-263 later this day be deferred until Tuesday, April 25 at 5.30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): When Bill C-263 was last before the House the hon. member for St. Boniface had approximately five minutes remaining in debate.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to continue my address on the bill presented by the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. As previously

stated, I believe that the objectives of the bill are well intended. My colleagues and I are in favour of ensuring adequate accountability for all crown corporations. However, the proposed bill has a number of shortcomings which I will continue to review today.

The last time I spoke on the bill I examined some of the reasons for exemptions. Exemptions reflect some of the very special sensitivities in the relationship between the government and these particular corporations. Each has been created by a special act which carefully outlines a very specific mandate. For some the act sets out requirements for the administration of resources. This becomes of particular importance in ensuring the accountability among these crown corporations which provide, for example, grants. A case in point is the Canada Council.

[Translation]

It is of paramount importance that the Canada Council be permitted to freely select recipients of grants and that this be the public's perception. I am of the opinion that the artistic value of a work is not a political issue and that it is inappropriate for the government to set conditions in this area.

[English]

Similarly, I believe strongly in protecting the mandated freedom of the CBC in areas of programming and journalistic independence. This freedom led to the provision that the CBC also be exempted from part X in 1984.

I recognize that the hon. member deliberately left out the CBC in order to remove, as much as possible, contentious issues. My concern is that the reasons for granting exemption from part X for other corporations, such as the Canadian Wheat Board, present issues which may be viewed as equally contentious, especially by Canadians or groups of Canadians these corporations serve.

[Translation]

Should we not first hold comprehensive consultations with the affected parties to examine these issues in depth?

[English]

It appears to me the bill fails to recognize as much as it should that the unique mandates of the affected corporations require more serious consideration in developing an appropriate accountability framework.