

Business of the House

In answer to the second question, of course one knows that the information and knowledge that Canadians gain from this institution is enhanced when there is adequate time to understand, to do the research and the proper background studies to pose questions that are sensible and appropriate.

Providing members of the opposition with the weekend to read the estimates allows them to think about the more substantial issues and come forward on Monday with properly posed questions to which answers will be promptly and fully provided. This is serving the people of Canada in a far superior manner than that suggested by my hon. colleague, the leader of the Liberal Party in the House.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point that was raised by the House leader of the Liberal Party and responded to by the government House leader.

I think it is entirely appropriate that this House have the Supplementary Estimates tabled at ten o'clock. As we saw today during Question Period, every question that we asked in relationship to rumours that are out there were answered with: wait till tomorrow. If we do not move the tabling to ten o'clock tomorrow morning, the answer will be: wait till Monday to ask those questions.

I think it is the responsibility of this House to ensure that the information is out there in a timely fashion so that we can question the government and that over the weekend the people of Canada can decide what exactly it is that the government has done.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I want to suggest to the government House leader that what we are after tomorrow morning is to be able to analyse the information in question and to hold the government accountable, which is the role of this House. It is our duty as members of Parliament to do that.

What we want from the minister is quite clear. He can, if he would like, with our consent, table those documents at 10 a.m. and give us an advance briefing in the morning. Members of Parliament would be very much prepared to have that kind of briefing if the government

would offer it. If not, members will be left to conclude that the government would like for the Canadian public to have the weekend to forget about the issue in part, before being accountable to it late Monday afternoon.

Why not get the information tomorrow morning and have the government stand up and be held to account for the actions that it takes? Surely those cuts are not that offensive that the government does not want us to ask questions about them?

Mr. Andre: Madam Speaker, the procedure for handling estimates is laid out in the Standing Orders. It provides that the estimates are tabled in the House and then referred to appropriate committees of the House so that careful, responsible, detailed analysis of each and every item can occur.

What we have here are declarations by the opposition, in essence, that the way in which we have careful, full, detailed analysis of government expenditure plans is through Question Period.

Surely anyone who watches this today or any other day would be horrified by the judgment that Question Period is the appropriate vehicle through which careful, thoughtful analysis of government programs or expenditure plans should be made. It clearly is not.

We discussed, I will concede to the opposition, whether it would be appropriate to bring in the estimates on Monday or bring them in on Friday. In fact some of us, myself included, thought that perhaps as an experiment we would see if providing a weekend for some more thoughtful analysis might result in a little less cheap shots, cheap accusations, and the kind of partisan debate that goes on which distorts what is happening and does not serve the people of Canada well.

Work on it over the weekend. Ask some sensible questions on Monday.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I think the government House leader does himself and the House a disservice. He is fully aware that the Standing Orders have always been changed for such matters as the budget, but the Standing Orders have always required that the House obtain unanimous consent in order that the Minister of Finance can deliver his budget at a time when the government wishes, and we do so.