

Time Allocation

● (1500)

[Translation]

PETITIONS

MRS. CÔTÉ—OLD AGE SECURITY

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table the three hundred and seventy-ninth report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Rimouski-Témiscouata on Thursday, January 27, 1983, and finds that it meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

STANDING COMMITTEES

PRESENTATION OF THIRD REPORT OF STRIKING COMMITTEE

Mr. Charles Turner (London East): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the third report of the Striking Committee, in both official languages.

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[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

ALLOCATION OF TIME TO CONSIDER REPORT AND THIRD READING STAGES OF BILL C-131

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (No. 2), one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of each of the report stage and the third reading stage of the Bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on those days, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this Order and, in turn, every question then necessary in order to dispose of the stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

She said: In opening the debate, Mr. Speaker, on our motion to allocate time for Bill C-131, an Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (No. 2), I have a few comments I would like to submit to the attention of the Members of this House.

I believe it would be useful to recall, briefly, that the purpose of debate is to give all Members an opportunity to submit their opinions and put forward their arguments regarding a bill—usually tabled by the Government—to say whether they are for or against, and to explain their reasons, thus enabling this House to reach a decision on the bill, to amend it if necessary and then proceed with the next stage of public bills.

[English]

The debate on Bill C-131 which has already taken place in Parliament has achieved this purpose. The proposal to limit indexation of the Old Age Security Pension to 6 per cent in 1983 and 5 per cent in 1984 was first announced in the budget at the end of last June as part of the Government's six and five program. Bill C-131, which follows up on the intention stated in the June budget, was introduced in the House in October, 1982. This five-page Bill consisting of two Clauses explains quite simply and clearly that instead of the usual full automatic indexation according to the cost of living, we will reduce the indexation to 6 per cent as of when the Bill is passed this year and 5 per cent next year. This notifies senior citizens that all those who are in receipt of the supplement, even a small portion of it, will see that fully indexed, to make up for the small loss on their basic pension.

The debate on this Bill began on November 18, when second reading debate started. The Bill was approved in principle. It was then referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs where it was studied in detail for another four days. The Committee considered briefs and heard witnesses. In total, 71 Members have spoken at various stages of debate on this Bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of repeating the arguments pro and con made on both sides of the House with respect to this bill. Its purpose is to reduce inflationary expectations and to make a joint effort to bring the rate of inflation down to the lowest possible figure—when the Budget was brought down six months ago we had double-digit inflation—that is, we want to restrict the indexing of Old Age Security pensions of approximately 1.1 million pensioners, and this means only those who have other sources of income and do not receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

I have said time and time again—in the House, in committee, on radio and television, in correspondence and in meetings with the general public—that this Bill will not take away even one penny from the fully indexed pensions and the supplement of pensioners who are in need. I want to make it perfectly clear that all pensioners receiving the supplement, even if it is only \$2 a month, as well as all pensioners receiving the Spouses Allowance, will continue to receive fully indexed pensions and supplements.

I think the case for time allocation for the remainder of the debate—a measure we were unfortunately obliged to impose—is easily made if we look at the content of the speeches reported in *Hansard*. Government Members who spoke in favour of the Bill clearly confirmed, in their own words and according to their respective points of view and perspectives, that the Bill would not have the slightest harmful effect on the majority of pensioners receiving the supplement and would only mean a