

*Government Orders*

illegal. If there had been, we would need a police investigation, not legislation.

As so often happens, there comes a time we must concede that enough has been said and it is time for action. And why is it time for action? So that a major transportation facility can become operational, and so we can decide how this utility will be managed in the future. Why can't we do that now? Because there are some very tough obstacles to be overcome before we can make decisions concerning the future of Pearson International Airport.

• (1225)

[English]

What does the opposition propose? That we sit back and conduct another study, another inquiry, and probably another one after that if it does not like the outcome any better than it seems to like the one from Mr. Nixon?

Have opposition members thought through what they would need to do after their inquiry was finished? Maybe then they would realize that they have to draft legislation to put an end to this deal. Maybe then they would realize that they would have to draft legislation to set the parameters for negotiating a settlement with the developers. Maybe they would even realize that the legislation should contain a provision to ensure that negotiations do not drag on interminably; that when enough is enough tell the developers that they will not get anything.

That sounds like pretty good legislation. I wonder what words they would use. I suggest they have to look no further than the legislation before us today.

[Translation]

We never spoke of compensating developers and I want to stress this point. The only possibly negotiable item is the amount of compensation for any expense qualifying under a signed agreement with the state.

Lost opportunities and profits are excluded. Fees paid to lobbyists will not be refunded, and we must remember that last October, members opposite wanted us to pay some compensation after the contract with Paramax was cancelled. The Leader of the Opposition even said that we should pay one billion dollars in compensation to Paramax, after its contract with the government was cancelled. Just think, on the one hand they tell us not to compensate and on the other to do it.

[English]

I have to say that I have been surprised by the attitude of the Reform Party on this also. It supports the motion from the Bloc with its own particular brand of subamendment. I am truly surprised to know that it wants to delay a resolution to the situation facing Pearson airport, that it too wants to conduct an inquiry at taxpayers' expense. We on this side of the House

always thought it was against any frivolous expenses on inquiries.

Sure, it is redefining its position to say that the standing committee could do it. It does not need to be a royal commission. I hate to point out the obvious, but the standing committee does not need any special direction from the House to conduct a study; it already has all kinds of authority to choose what kind of business it will conduct. Does it need to conduct a huge and expensive inquiry? I submit the answer is no, at least in part because I am sure the members of the committee have all read the Nixon report and recognize that no further information is required to reach the conclusion that this deal needs to be ended.

I have let myself get carried away here a little.

[Translation]

I simply wanted to take this opportunity to set the record straight. First, under clause 10, the Minister of Transport must obtain the approval of the governor in council to enter into any negotiated agreement.

Besides, the criteria governing such an agreement could not be more specific: no compensation is to be paid for any loss of profit or any fee paid to lobbyists. Out-of-pocket expenses, evidence of which must be provided, are really what developers have spent on any fully-justified activity related to the transaction concluded with the previous government.

The government must ensure that there is no roundabout way for developers to claim that profits totalling such and such amount could have been made had they received the green light. As well, the approval of the Governor in Council ensures that the decision is up to the government, and not strictly up to one minister.

[English]

Fourth and finally, I wish to remind the House that there is an incredibly wide range of opportunities for further and continuing scrutiny of any potential settlement by members of the House, by the media and by the public at large.

[Translation]

Let me only say, for example, that the financial commitments made by the Canadian government can be duly examined by the Auditor General.

• (1230)

They can also be discussed and called into question here daily, or be included in budgetary review process in the House and in committee. Detailed questions can be asked about them. Under the Access to Information Act, the public and, of course, the media can follow the matter closely. These commitments can also be the focus of letters and petitions sent to the minister and to the government.