

*Supply*

We are offering this motion today. I appreciate the points made by the Deputy Government House Leader that perhaps there is an alteration in the traditional wording. However, we felt that this issue certainly was above the usual partisan concerns found in the House of Commons and that it was an item that all of us would support.

With due respect to my hon. friend, if that were to cause problems, in other words if that were to provide a reason that might make it awkward for government Members to support this initiative, we would welcome an amendment. As a matter of fact, we would propose an amendment if the Government would see that appropriate. We will wait your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as the day goes on.

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, just in case there is some confusion, let me say that today is a supply day and that the support of an opposition motion on a supply day would be treated, I think, in terms of our precedents, as a matter of confidence. I would not want to leave any sense of confusion about that as the chief government Whip. Supply days have a special purpose in our Standing Orders. Today is a supply day and the motion is a votable one. I could signal to the House that it is my intention to defer the vote until Monday if that is helpful to Members. I would not want to leave any sense of confusion. The wording of the motion is one issue. The purpose of a supply day is a very different issue.

**Mr. Riis:** I know it is important that we begin this debate, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to say that we appreciate the interpretation that the government Whip might place on this, but I want to make it very clear, before the debate begins, that in no way would we consider this to be a motion of confidence in the Government, absolutely not. This is an issue that must rise above partisan concerns. It is an item on which we all have very strong feelings. To consider it to be a vote of confidence is something that we would not anticipate, and I want to declare here and now that in no way ought it be construed as a vote of confidence in the Government.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair will take the matter under advisement and report back to the House as soon as possible. In the meantime debate will proceed with the Hon. Member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. On a point of order, the Hon. Member for Kamloops.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, when we debated the issue of South Moresby, which you will recall, it was not considered to be a confidence motion. It is in that same spirit that I make this point. We feel that this case is not dissimilar to the South Moresby case. With all due respect, I want to make it very clear that confidence is not an issue here.

**Mr. Charest:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong this debate though it seems that is what is happening. We do want to point out that the issue of wording is important for future debates in this House. We bring that to Your Honour's attention, at the same time recognizing the fact that we expect debate to go on. The wording for future debates is important for us; it is important that it be clarified.

I also want to indicate, as the government Whip has done, that there is no mistake on this side of the House on the nature of this debate. I think the answer to that argument is found in the words of the House Leader of the New Democratic Party when he referred to the nature of an opposition motion. He said that it was often critical and admitted that this motion had been designed to be critical of the Government. I understand that maybe today is something of a non-partisan nature for him.

We have stated and the Minister for the Environment has said often that the issue of the environment is a non-partisan one. However, the simple fact of the matter in life is that we are now in the House of Commons in Canada. We cannot pretend that we are not here. The rules and traditions of the House are something with which we have to live and by which we have to abide in that spirit. I am sorry to say that it is part of the rules of today. For that reason the Government considers this motion to be a confidence motion, and we intend to behave accordingly.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say very briefly that while the points of order which have been raised deal with serious matters of concern with respect to the operation of the House, I hope we will be able to get on with debating the substance of the motion very soon. If you, Sir, are reserving judgment on the points of order, it would be understood that your ruling would not be such that the entire motion would be deemed out of order and the debate would not continue today.