

*Government Orders*

If a bill is so late in introduction or so poorly conceived that its legislative progress is unusually slow, the government alone bears that responsibility. It has more than adequate rules to assist it in taking on this particular responsibility. If a bill has not been passed by the end of a session, its death is thrice the responsibility of the government opposite.

First, the bill was not introduced in a timely way. Second, the government did not properly manage the legislative process of that bill. Third, the government alone had the power to end the session and thereby terminate the life of that bill.

From time to time in recent years some non-controversial government bills and some bills of great detail and national importance, but of little partisan account, have not been completed at the time of prorogation. In such circumstances, the House has been disposed to give its unanimous consent in the new session of Parliament to restore these items to the stage at which they died at the time of prorogation.

Let it be clear to those who are viewing today's proceedings that we have had two examples of such bills in the present session. One of these was the Crown corporations bill, an administrative proposal that, because of an important local interest, was subject to more extensive debate than some items of a similar nature. When the government asked to restore this bill to the stage at which it died in the previous session, we in the opposition recognized that it would be in the interests of the taxpayer and good public policy to expedite the measure, and the required unanimous consent was forthcoming from this side of the House. The bill has now been introduced and passed and consummated by this particular Chamber.

The other bill was the trust and loan companies legislation which is part of the major overhaul of the laws governing financial institutions in Canada. This bill had an extremely extensive committee stage, during which many diverse interests were asked to express their views, resulting in many amendments to the bill. The legislation has moved forward and forward in a spirit of non-partisan collaboration, an attitude that continues. The opposition had no difficulty whatsoever in agreeing to restore this bill so that the valuable work, not just of parliamentarians but of interested citizens and the general public as well, would not be ignored.

In this case the opposition probably was more eager than the government to agree to restore as, in our view, the government has been far too slow in proceeding with the financial institutions package. We are eager not just to finish the trust and loans bill, but to proceed with the other elements of the financial institutions package, especially the Bank Act revisions.

Unanimous consent to restore items such as these is always forthcoming. These bills in the last session were reasonably fairly handled by the government, I might add, and while we could not agree with the government on all of the policies put forward in this legislation, we believed the public interest would be best served by expediting this particular passage.

This is not the case with the legislation dealt with in the motion before us today. The most important of these bills is former Bill C-78, the environmental assessment bill. This legislation is as important as any placed before this Parliament as it addresses a subject of vital interest to the future of every Canadian from coast to coast. We in the Official Opposition co-operated with the government in moving the bill to committee. The government repaid us with vagueness, evasiveness and temporization. It has been unwilling to deal in substantial terms with possible amendments and it has been unreasonably reluctant to give the public any insight into how vital regulations under the legislation might be framed.

• (1150)

My colleague from Davenport will make reference to those specifics when he takes the floor shortly thereafter.

While the subject matter of the bill is important and the need to legislate in the area is essential, we see many flaws in the bill. The bill fails to incorporate any concept of sustainable development. The terms of the bill are vague and general where they should be firm and specific. Many of the factors proposed for governing environmental assessments and reviews are weaker than those under the existing environmental assessment and review order. There are loopholes in the bill that could lead to favourite individuals or companies being able to evade the provisions of the legislation.

There is undue discretionary power permitted the minister. Not that the minister will be bad, but when one person has that kind of power, there must be some