

*Privilege**[English]*

During the discussion on this question of privilege, the Hon. Member for Kamloops (Mr. Riis) also rose in support of the contention that the rights of the House had been breached. In reply, the Hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Lewis) argued that the question of privilege had not been raised at the first opportunity available. He indicated that all of the requirements of the Financial Administration Act had been met by the Government.

• (1120)

Before I get into the substantive issues on Supply, I would briefly like to address the matter of whether this question was brought forward within a reasonable period of time as required by our practices. The Hon. Members for Kingston and the Islands and for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell gave the Chair written notice on April 5 that they would be raising a question of privilege. Since one of their complaints arose as a result of apparent omissions in the Speech from the Throne which was read on April 3, the very earliest occasion that they could have raised the matter was on April 4. On that day, by agreement, the House only heard two short speeches before adjourning. In fairness to all Hon. Members, I have to conclude that notice was given at a reasonably early opportunity.

[Translation]

I wish to remind Hon. Members that questions of privilege must be raised in a timely fashion. If a matter is so serious that the privileges of this House must be invoked, then it stands to reason that the practice of bringing these matters to the attention of the House at an early opportunity must be respected. In the present submission, I feel that the practice has been respected.

[English]

Since the business of Supply is a complex procedure and since many of the new Members have not yet had an opportunity to examine its components, I feel that this would be an appropriate time to briefly review certain aspects of the Supply process.

The business of approving the spending plans of the Government is one of the major responsibilities of Parliament. The process by which the Government submits its projected annual expenditures for parliamentary approval is known as the Supply process. Once Supply is granted, the Government can draw on the

Consolidated Revenue Fund to meet its financial obligations.

The basic principle supporting the Supply process is that the Sovereign, or the Crown, is charged with the management of all payments for Public Service. The Crown acting on the advice of its responsible ministers makes known to the Commons the pecuniary needs of the Government; the Commons, in return, grants such supplies as are needed to satisfy these demands.

The House of Commons has an important role to play in this complicated process. It is in the Commons where the Government's projected expenditures—known as the "Estimates"—are first tabled and the legislation to implement the estimates—known as the "Appropriation" Bill—is introduced. Section 53 of the Constitution Act, 1867 stipulates that all financial legislation, and this includes Government expenditures, must originate in the House of Commons. This requirement is reaffirmed in the Commons' own rules of procedure, more specifically Standing Order 80(1), a point which was clearly referred to by Hon. Members the other day.

[Translation]

As a result of the fact that Main Estimates for the upcoming fiscal year are usually adopted at the end of June, the Government could be without funds from the beginning of the fiscal year in April to the end of June. The rules accordingly provide for the Government to request an advance against the Main Estimates which is known as Interim Supply. From time to time during a session, the Government may also require additional funds which are introduced by way of Supplementary Estimates.

[English]

During lengthy periods when Parliament is dissolved or prorogued, an urgent need for funds may occur. Under special conditions, provided for in the Financial Administration Act, the Government may draw on the Consolidated Revenue Fund after a Special Warrant has been signed by the Governor General. Unlike interim supply and supplementary estimates, the use of Special Warrants is not a routine matter and the Government is required to inform the House, after the fact, when the warrants are tabled. Subsequently the supply granted by the Governor General will be included in the first supply Bill for scrutiny and approval by the House.

Now to address the specific points raised by Hon. Members in their question of privilege of April 6.