

[English]

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS) ACT

PROVISION OF PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES TO EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES' OFFICIALS IN CANADA

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (for the Secretary of State for External Affairs) moved the first reading of Bill S-25 (from the Senate), to amend the Privileges and Immunities (International Organizations) Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

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● (1200)

NATIONAL CAPITAL

ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE TO STUDY DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION AND OPERATIONS OF COMMISSION

On the order:

That a special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons be appointed to review and report upon matters bearing upon the development of the national capital region, including the programs and operations of the National Capital Commission;

That 15 members of the House of Commons to be designated by the House at a later date be the members on the part of this House of the special joint committee;

That the said committee have the power to send for persons, papers and records and examine witnesses; to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House; to report from time to time; to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be deemed advisable; to delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House; and to adjourn from place to place within Canada; and

That a message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose, and to select, if the Senate deems it advisable, some of its members to act on the proposed special joint committee.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to section 2 of Standing Order 21, this notice of motion is transferred to and ordered for consideration under government orders at the next sitting of the House.

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[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

PETITION ON ABORTION PROVISIONS—TABLING OF NINTH REPORT OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid on the table the ninth report of the Clerk of Petitions.

[English]

The Clerk of the House announced that the above mentioned report meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I request, under Standing Order 67(8), that the petition presented by the Committee of One Million be now read by the Clerk, and because the subject is a

Abortion

grievance requiring an immediate remedy I ask that the matter be brought into immediate debate. Notwithstanding Your Honour's previous ruling under Standing Order 43 that abortion, while important, is of continuing rather than immediate concern, I respectfully suggest that the special circumstances of this petition enjoin members to give it their immediate attention so that we can urge upon the government a speedy and urgent remedy.

Never before has parliament received a petition containing one million names, and these one million Canadians will be affronted by this institution if the petition is relegated to the musty shelves of our basement, all the more so because abortions, which have quadrupled over a four-year period to 43,201, are now recognized as constituting a grave social problem.

I remind Your Honour that the groups making up the Committee of One Million have previously presented briefs to the government urging that section 251 of the Criminal Code be amended to tighten the law so that hospital abortion committees would be empowered to permit abortions only in cases where the medical need is indisputable. The government has not acted, and abortions continue to escalate. The Committee of One Million has therefore appealed to parliament to redress this grievance. Members of this institution are also ombudsmen and we must be permitted to debate vital national questions irrespective of the government's willingness or unwillingness to present these matters to us. Nor is this a partisan matter, as the formation of the Interparliamentary Group in Defence of the Unborn, composed of members from all parties, clearly shows.

Yesterday, the willingness of the House to take on this exceptionally important subject was evident. I ask, and will so move if acceptable, that we now debate the petition of the Committee of One Million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member has put into question the idea that we should consider an immediate debate on the petition which was put forward yesterday. The motion is that the petition be now read by the Clerk of the House and, further, that it be brought into immediate debate.

The hon. member has referred to a previous ruling of the Chair. I would remind him of that ruling; I do not propose to quote it. It was based on an explicit ruling of the Hon. Lucien Lamoureux whose tenor left no doubt about the principle, and nothing which has happened in the interval persuade me otherwise. The principle of the operation of a representative government, as this parliament is, is that the representatives are elected to bring here the views of their constituents and it is through them, in debate in the House and by representations to the government, that amendments to the law ought to be proposed, discussed, debated and finalized if it is the will of the House.

Nevertheless, there are exceptional provisions with respect to petitions once they have been received and certified as to form. The purpose of those petitions is to redress a personal grievance. The hon. member is first of all asking that the petition be read. He is aware that yesterday the petition was read by the hon. member for York South (Mrs. Appolloni) when she put the petition forward. The fact of the matter is that the statement