

*Privilege*

I would like to make a point which is very germane to the argument we are facing today, and upon which, Mr. Speaker, you will have to make a decision. I would like to read the words of the minister when he rose in the House yesterday afternoon to propose this motion. I quote from page 14016 of *Hansard*, the top right hand column:

We will continue to try to get an agreement with the opposition parties on a reasonable length of time that we debate this on second reading and get it into committee for an in-depth study.

In other words, the minister offered once again at the time of the introduction of the notice, an opportunity for negotiation. I use the words "once again" because I think those words are very crucial.

I would also like to point out that at page 14015 of *Hansard* the time listed at the bottom of the page on the left hand corner is 1740. I am guessing that roughly the time the minister put the proposal to the House was somewhere around 1745 or 1746. In other words, it was late in the debate yesterday.

Why did the minister move at that particular moment? Was it a time pulled out of the air? No, it was not the time pulled out of the air. The reason it was not a time pulled out of the air is because yesterday, in my role as parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government in the House, I tried to discuss with the opposition parties an attempt to come to agreements on a whole basket of legislation.

Yesterday the hon. member who rose on the point of order, the House leader for the Official Opposition was doing some important work in committee. I know that. As a result of that, yesterday I attempted to talk to the Whip of the Liberal Party. I attempted on three different occasions to talk to him. He was in and out of the House so we kept missing one another. I left word in the back room that I wished to speak to him. I waited until a few minutes to six, and in fact, as the timing shows in *Hansard*, I think it would work out to roughly 5.45, before I asked the minister to proceed with the notice on the time allocation.

The reason I point this out is that there were attempts on my part to have a discussion with the Official Opposition to go through this process. While going through the process of trying to have my discussions yesterday, I ended up talking with the House leader for the NDP. During the conversations we had it became

very obvious to me that in fact there was no possibility for agreement under Standing Order 78(1). That one was clearly ruled out.

I attempted then to have conversations with the Official Opposition but was not successful. There were further attempts made and in fact, finally last evening, I ran into the Whip for the Official Opposition as he was going up in the elevator and after talking to him a moment indicated to him that it was our intention to proceed with this notice, but that we would still want to talk. I also had a conversation this morning with the House leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to demonstrate to you, I hope successfully, is that there have been several attempts, both publicly and privately, to proceed with discussions which would allow us to come to an agreement. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, those consultations did not take place other than the discussions that happened at the House leaders' meeting on the Tuesday previous, 48 hours or more ago.

I think it is very crucial because, again, if you go back to the wording of Standing Order 78(1), (2), and (3) it becomes very apparent from that wording that an agreement could not be reached.

Mr. Speaker, we could not reach an agreement. We have offered on several occasions, including as much as an hour and a half ago, to have further consultations to come to some sort of agreement. That was refused and obviously we do not have an agreement.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the notice of motion that was given yesterday by the minister was a perfectly legitimate motion. It was obvious that there was not agreement, and there was every reason to believe, as has been confirmed, that there was no agreement.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are left with a situation where the government wants to continue with its legislative agenda and do that in a reasonable time frame, it has to resort to the tools that are provided by the House of Commons in its Standing Orders.

We have done that. We have done that in this case. We have done it in previous cases. So although my friend makes a very persuasive argument, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it simply is not a legitimate point of privilege. We offer once again to have consultations and to continue to have those negotiations.