

tells us will be the terms of reference of the committee, namely, the examination of major ongoing government projects. He said that in his view the Standing Committee on Public Accounts looks at history. I do not agree with that, but accepting that interpretation for the moment, and assuming that it is the wish of members of this House—to give that interpretation to the terms of reference of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I would insist that this motion be clarified so as to make it absolutely clear that it is concerned with ongoing major government projects.

Therefore, looking at the English version, I propose, seconded by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans), that the word “ongoing” be added after the word “major” in the third line of the motion. Thus the opening paragraph of the motion would read as follows:

That a special committee of the House of Commons be appointed to inquire fully into the measures necessary to prevent recurring cost overruns on major ongoing government projects (defined as those involving expenditures in excess of \$1 million) and in particular—

The rest of the motion would remain the same. I formally propose that amendment.

Before concluding my brief remarks, I might add that the motion, as amended, is entirely in conformity with the *raison d'être* of this special committee as expressed to the House in the comments of the President of the Treasury Board during his presentation in support of the motion this afternoon, and also in response to the questions I put to him earlier during oral questions today.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that there is no written draft of the amendment available yet, but that one is being prepared now.

Mr. Johnston: Right.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): While we are waiting for it to be prepared, did I hear the hon. member correctly to say that the word “ongoing” was after the word “recurring”, in the third line, and before the word “cost”?

Mr. Johnston: No. The word “ongoing” is after the word “major”. It will read, “major ongoing government projects”.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Order, please. I understand we will wait for the hon. member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston) to present his amendment in writing.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is right.

Mr. Knowles: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Is the hon. member for Saint-Henri-Westmount ready?

Cost Overruns

● (1620)

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, could I present the amendment?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): It is moved by the hon. member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston), seconded by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans), that motion No. 5 on the order paper be amended in the first paragraph by adding the word “ongoing” after the word “major” so that the paragraph would read as follows:

That a special committee of the House of Commons be appointed to inquire fully into the measures necessary to prevent recurring cost overruns on major ongoing government projects (defined as those involving expenditures in excess of \$1 million)—

I would now invite views from both sides of the House on this amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I would simply point out that it is impossible to be against the amendment because it is stated in paragraph 2, and I quote:—present or future major government projects—

We are inserting “ongoing projects”. The term is repeated, and nothing more.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Knowles: On the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): On the amendment. Does the House adopt the said amendment?

Hon. Walter Baker (President of Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable care to the speech by the hon. member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston). He was arguing very effectively and very eloquently for the work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, but when I compared what he had to say with what was said by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) in moving the motion, I was struck with the positioning of the word “ongoing”. It is quite difficult for us to define what is an ongoing project in terms of the kinds of things that are envisaged by this amendment.

For instance, the President of the Treasury Board mentioned the Mirabel airport. Because aircraft are using that airport, and in terms of the cost overruns that are involved, is it to be said that it ceases to be a case where cost overruns in the present sense could not continue? I have in mind particularly what the President of the Treasury Board had to say about land acquisitions around the airport and the tremendous costs that are being imposed upon the people and the Government of Canada in respect of the operation of the airport.

What I am saying to the House is that I think it is important that this be considered not only in terms of the work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, but also in