

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), I have been requested by the chief government whip to defer the motion until a later time.

[Translation]

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), the recorded division on the question now before the House stands deferred until 5.30 p.m. today, at which time the bells to call in the members will be sounded for not more than 15 minutes.

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[English]

EXCISE ACT

The House resumed from February 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act to amend the Excise Act, the Customs Act and the Tobacco Sales to Young Persons Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gagliano: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I think you would find unanimous consent, since we deferred the vote, to go on to Private Members' Hour as soon as we find the members who are on the agenda for Private Members' Hour.

Private Members' Hour will probably take us up to the time for taking the vote. Instead of doing Private Members' Hour after the vote, we will do it before. If there is unanimous consent, we could suspend the sitting temporarily. As soon as the whips find their spokespersons for Private Members' Hour the sitting can resume. Then we could suspend and start the votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The sitting of the House is suspended to the call of the chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 4.04 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 4.10 p.m.

[Translation]

Mr. Gagliano: Madam Speaker, I think you have the unanimous consent of the House to go back to government orders, and proceed with Bill C-11. After that, we will see what time it is and perhaps move on to private members' business before the division. I will come back to that, Madam Speaker.

I apologize to the House. I misunderstood but we would like—and I think there is unanimous consent—to move on to Bill C-11 right away.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Do we have unanimous consent to resume debating on C-11?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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EXCISE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act to amend the Excise Act, the Customs Act and the Tobacco Sales to Young Persons Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Madam Speaker, this is an excellent opportunity for me to develop an issue in this House. I attempted to do this when the government was talking about rolling back the taxes or in fact went ahead with the whole business of rolling back the taxes on cigarettes.

Subsequent to that time it has been interesting to interview the interviewers, the people actually responsible for bringing the news to Canadians. Basically they have told me if you cannot say something and put your point over in 10 seconds it probably will not be news. It probably will not get on television. This is an opportunity then with a little bit more time than that to actually raise an issue I attempted to raise previously.

My issue is that of corporate responsibility. It is the responsibility the cigarette manufacturers and distillers have to the people of Canada. I have some questions about the way in which they are carrying out their responsibility.

During the time this whole issue was boiling another member of the House approached me with two empty Export A cigarette packages. Both of them had been purchased illegally. One was purchased three weeks prior to the government taking its action in bringing forward its measure on export taxes. The other was purchased one week before.

Both packages appeared to me to be exactly the same, until I studied them a little more closely. The first package given to me had on it "25 Class A Finest Canadian Filter Cigarettes" and very proudly "Product of Canada". The package that was purchased one week later, approximately one week prior to the government announcing its export tax, had on it "R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., Winston Salem, NC, Under Licence from R.J.R.—MacDonald, Inc., Canada".

It appears what was going on here was that the company expected there was going to be some form of export tax. Rather than manufacture the product in Canada and selling it to the U.S. where it would then be taken to a point where it could be brought back into Canada, the company's concern was why would it pay that export tax. It appears the company decided to manufacture the product, which appears for all purposes by its packaging to be exactly the same product, in Winston Salem, North Carolina