

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 23, 1985

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

ALLOCATION OF TIME TO CONSIDER REPORT AND THIRD READING STAGES OF BILL C-15

The House resumed, from Tuesday, May 21, 1985, consideration of the motion of Mr. Stevens:

That, further to the notice given on Thursday, May 2, 1985 by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, and pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 82, in relation to Bill C-15, An Act respecting investment in Canada, one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of each of the report stage and the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on those days, any proceedings then before the House shall be interrupted, if necessary, for the purpose of this Order and, in turn, every question necessary to dispose of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Mrs. Monique B. Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, when the debate was adjourned last Tuesday, we were discussing closure or time allocation for consideration of Bill C-15.

If we look at the debate on this Bill and what has happened up to this point, I must say, although the Opposition claims we did not have enough time to consider this legislation, that this is strictly the perception of the Opposition. On second reading, after six hours of serious debate, the Opposition moved a motion to postpone consideration of the Bill for six months. It was not the Government that decided not to have a serious debate on the Bill but the Opposition that decided that it was not now in a position to proceed with a serious study of the bill. In any case, we had sixteen-and-a-half hours of debate on second reading, including the Opposition's motion.

The Bill was referred to committee for consideration. The Committee heard 23 associations and more than 30 briefs were submitted and analysed. At this stage, the Opposition agreed to let us screen this information and, with the agreement of the Official Opposition, we were able to define the scope of the study to be carried out in Committee. At the stage of clause-by-clause consideration, we accepted 19 amendments, which were the result of our meetings with various associations and

of our analysis of various briefs. These amendments were mainly aimed at improving the Bill and making it respond to the expectations of so many Canadians.

The Bill has now been reported back to the House, and in addition to the 19 amendments that were approved, we have also had to examine 102 amending motions proposed by the Opposition. It soon became clear that with these amending motions, the Liberal Opposition especially wanted to make Investment Canada even stricter than FIRA. During the election campaign, however, Canadians knew perfectly well that the Progressive Conservative Government would introduce a Bill that would reflect the comments of Canadians and the changes that had to be made in the existing legislation.

If we look at the proposed legislation, it is clear that serious objections that had been made were taken into account in drafting this Bill, and that special attention was given to factors that could have an impact on Canadian culture. There is also special emphasis on the investments to be screened.

In the report stage study which the House must complete, the Opposition put up a whole slew of speakers who did not have anything new to contribute to the debate. Here we are still considering 105 Opposition motions, including 50 or close to half of them that have been rejected for being irrelevant and out of order. Every motion introduced at the various stages was meant to prolong the debate. Again last night I was listening to a public affairs program during which it was obvious that the majority of Canadians are under the impression that the Investment Canada Bill has long since been adopted. Only here in the House are we still facing the same opposition, they resort to delaying tactics, they are not ready, they want to hoist this measure. The Liberal Opposition is bent on delaying consideration of this Bill till kingdom come, yet it has had ten years to debate the issue and introduce its own amendments. We know that interested parties had been seeking changes for years and that the Liberals have had more than enough time to take action had they wanted to do so. They have come up with good suggestions since September 4, so I wonder why they did not think of them before.

I know what has been going on in the House, that we even had an Opposition day debate on the issue we are still considering today—and that was rather unusual—a debate which is a waste of time since we know the positions of the parties will not change, which makes this debate utterly useless. The Opposition is simply rehashing the same old arguments day after day, we are wasting time, the debate will not change anything.