

*Routine Proceedings*

• (2150)

Some seven months ago the first addition to my family arrived. Christopher Speller has really brought joy to my life. He has really given me a better understanding of some of the concerns that young parents have in Canada today. I think the theme of my speech tonight will be to reflect on some of the views and concerns my constituents, especially those with young families have brought to me over the past four and a half years. They are some of the concerns that I feel have not been addressed by this government and so I want to relate them back to the fact that I do not feel we should be adjourning this House now.

I know everyone feels we should get out of here this evening but I do not believe that should be the case. I think there is a lot more work this Chamber should be doing now. I think there are a number of serious problems this country faces that we could be dealing with.

The hon. House leader of the Conservative Party noted all those fine pieces of legislation that have been passed through this House in the past little while but there are a number of concerns that Canadians have, not the least of which is a concern regarding this Chamber and how it works. People, especially those in some of the have not provinces who do not have an opportunity to get close to a member of Parliament or see how this Chamber works, feel that this Chamber does not represent them, that somehow democracy is not working in this country. That feeling is being expressed by people such as those in the Reform Party who feel that members of Parliament, especially backbench members of Parliament, should be freely able to represent their constituents and have free votes.

I have voted against my party on a few occasions and I am glad my hon. Whip is here and still talking to me. I have to say I agree that free votes are important. They are an important tool for members of Parliament to express the views of their constituents, but they are not the most important part of parliamentary reform. Over the past four and a half years over the hundreds and hundreds of votes that I have taken on behalf of my constituents I have felt on only three occasions that there was an issue of great importance to my constituents and I would have to vote against the wishes of my party.

There are many more things this House could do and many changes it could make that would make this place a lot more democratic and responsive to the needs of Canadians. I am talking specifically about the idea of more scrutiny of government expenditures and also of an ability of this House in terms of the development of legislation to be able to actually have a say in how that bill is developed.

As we know right now legislation is developed in the back rooms of certain ministries here in Ottawa. Bureaucracies get together and trade off different views and ideas. All the trade-offs are done outside this Chamber somewhere in and around Ottawa in the offices.

A member of Parliament like myself who wishes to help my constituents in the development of bills and have some say in how these decisions are being made has no say whatsoever. Committees of this House have to be able to develop legislation and take it through in a non-partisan way.

• (2155)

A lot of Canadians do not understand just how a committee works. We in the opposition and the government actually work quite well together in scrutinizing legislation. Without having that ability in the developmental stages, maybe in terms of a white paper or a green paper to have more of a say in how the legislation is developed, we as backbench members of Parliament or any member of Parliament will not be able to freely and fairly represent some of the interests of our constituents.

There has to be greater discussion of local concerns. I have raised many issues across my riding. I can remember one instance where there was a terrible tire fire in my riding. Canadians will remember it. I wanted an emergency debate on that issue. Under the rules, the Speaker at that time was not allowed to change the order of the day in the House in order to allow me to bring that forward for debate.

There are many other instances I have noticed over the years. Because of the stringent rules, the order of the House is not able to be changed to allow emergency circumstances to be debated in this House. There needs to be more leeway on the part of the Speaker or some rules changed to allow these sorts of debates to take place without just the agreement of the heads of the parties.