

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

● (1722)

**Mr. O'Connell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe standing order 103(1) requires a one week's delay to intervene after second reading in the House before a Standing Committee can consider a bill sent to it.

I would like to ask the House whether it would be prepared to give unanimous consent to waive that provision of Standing Order 103(1), in view of the possible tight time bind in which we may find ourselves with the House recessing on Wednesday next week and this notwithstanding the desire of most members of the House to move the bill to committee stage quickly.

In asking for that unanimous consent I might say that it would be contingent upon the committee being willing to receive the bill with less than one week's notice. I have not been able to consult the committee chairman beyond discussing with him generally that the bill will likely come to him some time soon. He does not know that it will be prior to the one week's interval. Therefore, I would like to ask the House if it would give unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 103(1) on the condition that the committee is willing to receive the bill.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to join in giving that consent. The hon. member for Scarborough East spoke to us about it a short while ago. There was one other point which was part of the understanding and that was with respect to the times of any meetings of the committee. They would be arranged by consultation, bearing in mind the possibility of members being present and the possibility of the availability of certain witnesses. So far as the waiving of the one week's requirement is concerned, as set out in Standing Order 103(1), we are prepared to agree to that.

We have an excellent example today, Mr. Speaker, of how useful it is to consult and to get together when there is an important problem before us.

**Mr. Paproski:** Mr. Speaker, we agree also.

**Mr. O'Connell:** Mr. Speaker, it is understood and agreed that the witnesses would have to be available.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Hon. members have heard the suggestion of the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell). Is it agreed and so ordered?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

### *Veterans Affairs*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

[*Translation*]

COPIES OF CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO  
DECENTRALIZATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil)** moved:

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all correspondence, notes, minutes of meetings and other communications relating to the decentralization of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Province of Prince Edward Island.

[*English*]

He said: Mr. Speaker, this notice of motion for the production of papers was put on the order paper because, in my opinion, the decision which was made to relocate most of the Department of Veterans Affairs to Prince Edward Island was made without adequate prior study. I fully support the program of decentralization. Equally I am happy that the Department of Veterans Affairs will, in large measure, be moving to Prince Edward Island. However, it is my opinion that before any such large move is made, proper studies should be conducted so that the full implications would be known before the decision is taken and the decision surely should be contingent upon the study.

The relocation of the Department of Veterans Affairs to Charlottetown was announced on October 28, 1976. A departmental task force was set up in November of that year to co-ordinate with the province and the municipality to monitor social, economic, physical activities and impacts. The site selection was due in the fall of 1977.

Part of my problems probably stems from the fact that the original announcement was made without any prior information given to interested members, myself included. In my riding there are many veterans, and there is also a large veterans hospital. Because of these contacts, I have constant communication with many of the employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Ottawa.

I received many phone calls concerning the announcement. I knew nothing about it. As the newspapers reported, I was especially irritated that the announcement should be made first in the media without concerned MP's being made aware of it. It was not alone. The Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion stated the Legion's opposition to the move. He said that the proposed move was not anticipated and the minister's announcement came as a complete surprise. The Dominion President made it clear that he was not opposed to the program of decentralization or the fact that the department was moving to Prince Edward Island, but the fact there had been no consultation was of concern.

The employees were eventually consulted. A questionnaire was given to them. Language concerns and possible disruptions to family life were seen as the main reasons for an overwhelming majority rejection of the move. Some 90 per cent of those responding to the questionnaire were opposed to the transfer. They had, of course, a multitude of reasons for their rejection. One of the obvious reasons why public servants might be