



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 99

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY BILL

Allotment of Time for Debate—
Motion Adopted

Speech by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, June 28, 2012

THE SENATE

Thursday, June 28, 2012

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY BILL

ALLOTMENT OF TIME FOR DEBATE— MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, here we are again. I rise to speak on yet another government guillotine motion, this time on the third reading of the massive ominous budget bill.

Senator Cordy: Is this a record?

Senator Tardif: It is a record.

Honourable senators, I am beginning to think that my colleague opposite, the Deputy Leader of the Government, must enjoy hearing my voice, since this is the third but I expect not final time in one week that he has obliged me to speak on a time allocation motion.

When the Deputy Leader of the Government rose to give his notice of time allocation yesterday on this budget bill — it is getting confusing, is it not, which time allocation motion we are talking about — he said that he had failed to reach an agreement with his counterpart on the other side. The agreement he sought to reach was to obtain a guarantee from me, as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that the bill in question would be passed this week.

Honourable senators, I ask you the following: How could I deny my colleagues the opportunity to carefully study this bill and to speak on behalf of their regions? How could I agree to put a fundamentally unreasonable time limit on the debate of this massive and complex bill?

Senator Cordy: That would be undemocratic.

Senator Tardif: Exactly.

Based on my own convictions and those of senators in our caucus, I could not agree to such a request. This is why we are here today debating this motion. I am resigned to the reality that the use of time allocation is to become a regular tool for the government — the rule rather than the exception.

While I cannot expect to change the minds of the government leadership on this motion, I do hope that other senators opposite will carefully consider the motion that they are being asked to support today. The government has an assurance that this bill will eventually pass. It has a majority in this chamber, and any standing vote will turn out in its favour. It is only a matter of time.

Honourable senators, there is no malevolent, dilatory effort being undertaken here. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is not being obstructionist for pure obstruction's sake. Let us understand clearly what is being proposed here. The government gave notice of its intention to use this closure motion after just one day of third reading debate on an ominous bill of 429 pages, 753 clauses, which introduces, amends or repeals more than 70 federal statutes. If the Senate were to consider every clause of this bill, the time limit the

government seeks to impose would allow for 47 seconds of total debate per clause.

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance only tabled its report in the Senate the day before yesterday, with over 33 hours of testimony from witnesses, plus an additional 36.5 hours of testimony from the five additional Senate committees that considered portions of this massive bill. How can the Senate possibly be in a position to complete its examination by the end of this day? If a senator wanted to examine the transcripts from all of these hearings, he or she would have literally thousands of pages to read through.

Honourable senators, it is getting to be a habit with this government, ramming legislation through the Senate as if this chamber were nothing more than a rubber stamp. This bill is not the only one being pushed through at the last minute. Today we begin debate at third reading on Bill C-11, a bill that was first tabled in the House of Commons on September 29 of last year. In those nine months in the other place, a total of 25 sitting days were devoted to study of the bill. Now the government in the Senate wishes to see it disposed of in this place in a matter of a few days.

Bill C-23, the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement, was in the house on two separate occasions, in the Fortieth and Forty-first Parliaments. There were a total of 12 meetings and 40 witnesses and over 12 months devoted to consideration. Here in this place, we again see the government expecting that the bill be passed within a few days and only hearing one witness.

[Translation]

It is true that this government holds a majority, but a majority government does not mean a government that does not listen. The senators of the opposition have real concerns about this bill — a bill that will have a real impact on the lives of all Canadians. Rather than using procedural manoeuvres to rush this bill through, the government should introduce a more convincing bill with a reasonable scope that might even receive some support from the opposition.

This type of mutual cooperation between the government and opposition benches in this chamber is not unusual. I like to think that senators from all parties take a certain pride in such cooperation.

I am not going to say anything more about this motion, because I believe that my remarks on the previous time allocation motions moved in this chamber in the past few days have made my position on this issue very clear.

Honourable senators, once again, I cannot support this time allocation motion.

[English]

Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck: Would the honourable senator take a question?

Senator Tardif: Yes.

Senator Dyck: In her position as deputy leader, the honourable senator has a great understanding of how things work within the Senate. I know that senators on the other side are always talking about Senate reform and a Triple-E Senate — elected, effective and equitable. We hear a lot about having elected senators and how that will make this a more effective chamber. How does time allocation make the chamber more effective? We seem to see this all the time. They are limiting debate. How does that affect our jobs as senators? How will we be more effective if we are not given

the proper amount of time to debate? What are the honourable senator's views on that particular question?

Senator Tardif: That is a huge question. Obviously, the Senate should be a chamber of sober second thought. We do need to have that time in order to carefully consider the legislation before us. That is the mandate that was given to us, according to the Constitution. We need the time to do our work, and it is unfortunate that there is a curtailment of debate.
