

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Elmer MacKay (Minister of Public Works): The National Capital Commission informs me as follows:

The Official Residences Council (ORC) was established in 1984 to provide independent and impartial advice to the Prime Minister and the government on the development, maintenance, refurbishing and operation of the buildings and grounds of Canada's seven official residences¹.

In 1986, the National Capital Commission (NCC) assumed responsibility for the six official residences located in the national capital region while Public Works Canada assumed responsibility for the Citadel in Quebec City. All major projects and acquisitions require the approval of the ORC before proceeding within the strict budgetary rules and allocations approved by Parliament. Minor projects are implemented directly by the NCC.

As the ORC indicated in its *Third Report Summer 1990*, the lion's share of public expenditures on official residences is directed to essential rehabilitation, repairs and routine maintenance of buildings, and the restoration and conservation of Crown-owned heritage furnishings and works of art. Since its establishment, the ORC has ensured that public funds are expended only to meet legitimate and verifiable needs.

It should also be noted that, in addition to being large residences, these are aging buildings: four of them incorporate structures that predate Confederation with the remaining buildings built early in this century. All of the official residences are included in the Federal Heritage Buildings Register, a status that requires their protection and preservation for future generations.

From January 1988 until August 1991, furnishing and decorating costs amounted to \$39,524 for 24 Sussex Drive and \$60,359 for Harrington Lake. For purposes of comparison, the ORC reported that the total operating expenses for the seven official residences for FY 1989/90 totalled \$2.8 million of which \$1.26 million was spent on Rideau Hall, \$107,000 on Stornoway and \$219,000 on 24 Sussex Drive.

¹These are: the residences of the Governor General, Rideau Hall in Ottawa and the Citadel in Quebec City; the Prime Minister's residences at 24 Sussex Drive and Harrington Lake; the Leader of the Opposition's residence, Stornoway; the residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Farm at Kingsmere; and the Government's guest house at 7 Rideau Gate.

Mr. Cooper: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask my hon. friend some hard questions, but in light of the fact that he has answered so many questions, I want to hold off.

I commend the government on doing some homework over the break and providing these answers. It is nice to be able to say something positive to my hon. friend for the work that he does.

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POINT OF ORDER**INCOME TAX RETURN FORMS**

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I want to raise this again with my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader.

I did not want to raise this earlier today for obvious reasons, but as we all know, tax returns are being sent out to the post offices. They are now being picked up by people, particularly the non-personalized ones. I have received a notice, and I guess we all did, that in western Canada many post offices are announcing that the forms cannot be picked up until after February 13 because they have some forms in one of the official languages but not in the other.

Could I ask my friend if perhaps by tomorrow someone could make a statement, at a critical time when everybody is wanting to get their tax returns filled out, on when they would be available in both official languages, particularly in western Canadian post offices.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member giving me notice of his concerns. I will indeed attempt to find an answer to his concerns and get back to him as soon as possible.