

*Government Orders*

to some of the problems that concerned him and concerned our party. We are very supportive of the open attitude that the minister has taken in this particular bill.

Originally we had some concerns about the discretion which the bill gave to the Governor in Council, to the cabinet. The government responded by accepting an amendment to section 4 that would have the effect of limiting, to some extent, the authority or direction of the Governor in Council to opt out of the provisions of the bill. That amendment was originally proposed by the member for Sault Ste. Marie and he is very happy that the government has accepted it.

In the committee, the minister and officials made a number of commitments that are also important to the effective operation of the bill and to the point that has already been discussed in debate. We are concerned that federal government property transactions should be completely open and above board and that the public should understand what is happening with respect to federal properties. Very specifically, as I understand it and the minister I hope can confirm for the record of *Hansard*, that Treasury Board will only recommend an Order in Council under clause 16(1) in two situations; first, if the transaction is possible under the regulations, but a minister feels the authorization of the Governor in Council is more appropriate or second, if the transaction is not covered by existing regulations. These points of policy by Treasury Board are very important and very useful and they assist us in giving the support which we do to this bill.

The minister made a further commitment to a communication campaign to ensure that the public is aware of the accessibility and availability of a directory of federal real property. I understand it should be ready by the end of the year. This means that approximately 25,000 to 30,000 properties will be listed along with basic descriptive data, the location, use, size, responsible department or corporation and that the campaign will include the distribution of the directory to various federal offices across the country, so that the public can have access to it. The government is offering to provide the directory to all of the land registration offices in Canada for public access and as well, as has already been referred to by the minister, the finalizing of a central inquiry system to respond to requests from the public for information from the directory. This inventory of federal land will at least

be available now so that the public will be aware of what federal lands there are.

I think the next step in the process, and again the minister has mentioned this, will be for the transactions themselves to be open so that the public can see that the dealing with federal government lands is entirely above board. We certainly acknowledge and support the efforts of the minister's department and Treasury Board to proceed effectively in this direction.

Having said that, I can then make the point that on the understanding of these commitments from the minister, our party is pleased to support this bill as a useful step forward in simplifying and making more modern federal land transactions.

Let me not finish without making one other point. It is a point which I made during second reading. I would encourage the minister to put this on his agenda for the next step in dealing with federal property. I know to some extent this is happening in any event with the inventory, but the point is this.

The federal government over the years has accumulated large parcels of property. In many cases the original purpose for the acquisition may have passed or the use of the property may have changed. There are new needs in our communities across Canada for land, particularly in urban centres. I am very conscious of my own constituency of Victoria, where there are a number of parcels of federal land which could serve very well in a new way: social housing and parks, for example.

Indeed, the Department of National Defence, as I referred at second reading, has a large parcel of land in an area called Rocky Point. It needs some of it but it is very hard for us in the area to imagine within its lifetime ever needing the rest of it. The department of course is going to say: "Oh yes, we may need this". It seems to me it is a function of Treasury Board to challenge the proposition that this land is needed and further, that there be built into this by Treasury Board some form of public consultation to identify this type of land.

The federal government generally, and particularly when it gets into the outer reaches of this country, in far-flung places like Victoria, the decision makers in Treasury Board are not as sensitive or aware of this. If there were some form of public process which would