

Government Orders

ogists provide us. Their services are very important to us and today I wish to stress even more the excellent job they do.

[English]

The department is the largest real estate agency in Canada, providing work spaces for some 150,000 government employees across the country. We also run all federal properties under the jurisdiction of any other department. We provide a wide variety of management, maintenance and improvement services for federal properties and facilities. The department holds an estimated \$6.5 billion of real estate on behalf of the people of Canada. The primary holdings are office buildings and common use facilities. We are also the custodians of national landmarks including the Parliament Buildings where we meet today, laboratories, warehouses, residences, bridges, highways, locks, dams and dry docks.

• (1305)

Three agencies provide services to public sector organizations on an optional fee for service basis. The Canada Communication Group offers communication services to government departments and agencies. Consulting and Auditing Canada's services include the full range of management consulting disciplines and specialities. The Canadian General Standards Board supports governments and the private sector through the development and distribution of standards for government and consumer products.

As members can see, a tremendous number of services are provided by the integrated department. By integrating all of these activities into one department we are making it easier for Canadians to deal with the government and we are making it cheaper for the government to function.

In fact the common sense rationalization of activities will result in annual savings, as I have indicated before, of some \$180 million by 1998. We are proving the government can reduce costs and improve services to Canadians at the same time. This is surely a goal all members of Parliament and all Canadians see.

The reality is that we are only able to achieve these worthwhile objectives through the extremely dedicated work of the public servants who have been brought together from other departments and agencies into one. Those public servants have shown extraordinary commitment to making this new department a success and I applaud their efforts.

By the time the department is fully integrated, the workforce will be reduced from 18,00 full time employees to 14,000. It takes a great deal of integrity for people to organize themselves out of a job in order to provide better government.

As the minister for public service renewal has stated, we can and will achieve changes with the absolute minimum of dislocation and involuntary lay-offs.

I respect the excellent work of the people in this department and I understand, as my minister does, that they are real human beings with real families, real bills to pay and a real commitment to serving the public with integrity. The minister and I are determined to treat them with the decency and fairness they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I wonder if I could make a request. This morning because of medical problem I have, I got to my chair a few seconds late and I missed my place, which is fair.

I wonder if could have the unanimous consent of the House to continue?

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to extend his statement by a few minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I want to add that in creating a modern department to serve Canadians better in the years ahead, we have also used the opportunity to bring forward legislation that is modern and up to date. The bill before the House of Commons reflects existing legislation and operational practices of the government. To put this in context, the DSS act dates back to 1967 and the Department of Public Works Act to 1867. That is even older than I am. This legislation must be modernized and brought into the 1990s.

The problem with making jokes about age is that some people agree it is probably true.

What we have done in preparing this bill is to eliminate unnecessary or antiquated sections of previous legislation which no longer make any sense in 1994. For example, in the Department of Public Works Act there is a long and detailed description of public works. It has been eliminated. We have modernized the legislative responsibilities of the department to reflect technological changes which have occurred in our society.

For example, the DSS act referred to data processing services. We have changed it to information management and information technology systems and services.

• (1310)

We have also eliminated old rules which added meaningless red tape to our efforts to provide responsive and affordable service to Canadians. For example, we have deleted the section requiring the tabling of an annual report as we are now producing a detailed report on the department's operations as part of our main estimates.