

Ottawa, December 24, 1918

Joseph Pope  
(sous-secrétaire d'État  
aux Affaires extérieures)  
à Newton Rowell

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Joseph Pope  
(Under-Secretary of State  
for External Affairs) to  
Newton Rowell

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Dear Mr. Rowell,

Although most unwilling to trespass upon your time with departmental matters which could possibly be postponed, I feel it incumbent upon me to draw your attention, as Acting Minister, to the great and growing inconvenience this Department is being subjected to owing to lack of office space. This has been increasingly marked by reason of delays which are taking place in the issue of passports, and the consequent dissatisfaction existing among Members of Parliament and others. While in the majority of cases their dissatisfaction is unreasonable, there is just enough ground for their complaints to lend colour to the criticism which reaches me from time to time. The average Member of Parliament does not know, and probably is not interested to know, that whereas not a great while ago the Department issued about forty passports a month, we are now dealing with nearly three thousand applications in the same space of time, or more than seventy times the number for which our arrangements were originally adapted. My passport office is away from the Department proper, lodged in the attic at some distance from my office and that of Mr. Walker, and highly inconvenient of access to the general public who have business there. It would greatly promote the expeditious issue of passports and public convenience if the staff could be brought together and accommodated with adjoining rooms on the second floor, in direct communication with the Under-Secretary and the Assistant Under-Secretary. There are a number of rooms along the corridor, opposite the office of the Solicitor General, which adjoin my Department and which should be attached to the Department of External Affairs. Last Winter they were occupied by Victory Loan young ladies of very youthful appearance, who, it strikes me, might just as well do their work anywhere else. If this Department is going to continue, it must eventually possess these rooms, for no expansion is possible on the other side, where we abut on the offices of the Governor General, and they in turn touch the Privy Council Office.

As I think I verbally explained to you, no provision for its *habitat* was made for this Department on its establishment, and its accommodation has always been markedly casual and inadequate. This inadequacy has recently been tensified [sic] by the fact of its having become the sole Department of the Prime Minister, yet nothing is being done to provide for this increased importance. There are four Departments – I may call them the ceremonial Departments, – which stand in an intimate relation towards each other and should be closely associated, that of the Governor General, the Privy Council, the External Affairs (presided over by the Prime Minister) and the Secretary of State of Canada. These Departments should always be grouped together. As my Department now stands, I have not room enough to conduct public business as it should be carried on, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has to seek quarters elsewhere, besides which, nine officials on the pay roll of this Department form the staff of the Prime Minister. In the event of changes, which are always possible, involving the return of these clerks or some of them, I have actually no place for a single one within the limits assigned to me. I feel this is not as it should be, and that it is my duty from time to time to call the attention of the Government to a condition of things which seriously hampers the present usefulness of the Department of External Affairs, and threatens even greater disabilities in the future....

Yours very truly,  
Joseph Pope