

Government Orders

We will do all in our power to complete that to ensure that question regarding press gallery members and their contracts is completed.

Mr. Nunziata: Madam Speaker, may I have some direction. I understand the rules require that questions on the Order Paper be answered within 45 days.

Can the member indicate what the ramifications of that rule are? Is it a hard and fast rule, or can we expect that the government will answer questions when it is supposed to, and that is within 45 days?

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, the government does try to meet the deadline of 45 days on all occasions. We are occasionally not successful, particularly when we are dealing with such a situation where the hon. member has asked us to survey all departments and agencies. He will know that is a considerable task because there are several departments and considerably more agencies.

One of the options available to the member is to transfer the question for debate. We would happily co-operate with him if he chose to do that. Otherwise I can assure him that I will continue to try to get those answers.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary has been answered.

Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Loiselle that Bill C-3, an act respecting the acquisition, administration and disposition of real property by the Government of Canada, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Madam Speaker, I want to address a very specific aspect of the

proposed legislation. The area I want to address is what I would call post-disposition disclosure.

Before I am done here I think I am going to get angry again. I am going to get angry because in my view, and I have only been in this House three years, this particular section of this bill is probably the single greatest step away from accountability that I have ever seen.

I want to say to the taxpayers, the shareholders of Canada, beware.

This particular bill governs the procedure by which the government manages and disposes of Canada's real estate assets. There are a lot of those assets maintained for many different reasons, ranging from our national parks to our federal office buildings to land that has been acquired for future use by the federal government for military purposes. There are many uses and all of them, with very few exceptions, are good and far-sighted. What really comes into dispute, from time to time, is the management of those assets.

When our government disposes of these real estate assets it usually goes through a process of decision making inside the Public Service to decide whether the assets should be sold. Ultimately a decision is made. If the decision is to sell it can be sold by different means: public auction, bids can be received, or it can be listed for sale in various manners. However the goal is to coax out a fair market price for the real estate.

I do not have any general problems with the conceptual process. My focus is on the post-sale disclosure, that is the way the public finds out how the disposition took place and where the proceeds went.

I want to bring to the House's attention two separate instances when assets of this government were disposed of and the government refused, refused and refused to tell the taxpayers and Parliament exactly how the assets were disposed of. I want to refer to them specifically. The first one is in relation to the sale of the de Havilland shares to Boeing Corporation. Those shares were disposed of by use of an order by the Governor in Council, and for those who may be reading the debate or watching it, the Governor in Council is basically the collection of cabinet ministers by which the government puts into effect decisions of the government under statute and under regulation.