

Government Orders

The final area of concern has to do with the lack of an effective oversight mechanism under the bill that would ensure all transactions involving a federal real property were in fact above reproach.

In this regard some have called for the establishment of a central depository where all instruments used by the federal government for property transfers and acquisitions would have to be deposited and would be open to the public. If a depository of this nature were established, information on property transactions would be readily available and would thus guard against the types of questionable deals that are still routinely uncovered by the Auditor General of Canada in his annual report to the House of Commons.

What I am asking the minister is: there must be a mechanism whereby we could avoid where humanly possible 99.9 per cent of the problems that could arise concerning the transparency of the operations. That essentially is the only criticism that I can make of the whole thing.

Like I said, it is a highly technical bill. We cannot pretend that we know every aspect. It is impossible.

An hon. member: Explain transparency.

Mr. Assad: Like my colleague mentions, can the minister explain how he sees the transparency of this bill as it is now? I am sure he would be open to a few suggestions from his department—they are very knowledgeable people—to assure everyone that all transactions would be literally, if humanly possible, above reproach.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The minister does not have to reply, since this is third reading, and usually there is no provision for questions and answers. However, if the House agrees and the minister wishes to answer the question, of course the Chair cannot object. The President of the Treasury Board.

[*English*]

Mr. Loiselle: Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. member indeed raises a very valid question.

We have to take it for granted that we expect this process to be above board and not to lead one to believe that all kinds of deals can be made. It is going to be a very

open process. The hon. member knows what was explained in committee.

• (1020)

We are proceeding to organize a better report mechanism. There are thousands of small transactions to be taken on. Still the member raises a very valid question. One must have access to the information. It must be made available as readily as possible so that people can satisfy themselves that these transactions have been open. We will have directors of real federal property management who will set up these systems so that we will have the best possible available information in the quickest possible time.

The process changes we bring with this bill will make it much easier for members and for anybody else who needs access to have access to these transactions. They will be much more open. The process will be much more public and the rules will be well known. They will be regionally open so that should any problem arise at the regional level, instead of having to go through Ottawa which is very costly for many of our citizens, they will have access regionally and eventually nationally, of course, inasmuch as we can physically to it.

We have also explained that to get all of this we will work together. It may take some time to centralize it. We have to see the *rapport qualité-prix*. It is a very costly enterprise.

The principle is that these transactions are open, accessible and of course are dealt with at market value, apart from arrangements that are made with local municipal or provincial governments. Even then our policy is to get the real value. There are occasions, as we have experienced in committee, where for local regional development reasons, we may make another arrangements. That again is public.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Madam Speaker, I rise to put our party's position on this bill. I am doing so as much on behalf of the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie who has been our spokesperson on this bill from the beginning as myself. He is unable to be here today but did not want to delay further disposition of this bill on that account and has asked me to speak to it.

I may say that the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie particularly asked me to congratulate the minister and his officials, as well as the members of the committee, for some very effective work in coming up with solutions