

*Government Orders*

government needs in terms of goods and services. Therefore improvements have been made that I wish to mention.

I understand the opposition because I myself was a member of the opposition for some time. I may have sometimes exaggerated but I think there was gross exaggeration today.

[English]

I want to get into my formal remarks. At the conclusion of his recent address to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of concentrating on providing good government.

[Translation]

This is what the legislation before the House today seeks to achieve. By giving its formal approval to the creation of the Department of Public Works and Government Services, Parliament goes one step further in offering Canadians everywhere good governmental services.

The bill brings together in a single department all the service agencies of the government in order to streamline government, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services and to better meet the needs of Canadians everywhere in Canada.

• (1300)

[English]

The new department means improved service to other government departments and agencies as well as improved service to Canadians. Taxpayers save money. Government departments have one-stop shopping for all their service needs and there is a single window to the government for suppliers and contractors across the country.

The creation of a new department simplifies the business of doing business with the government. It simplifies the process of receiving information from the government. Parliament is asked to give approval to rolling government service agencies into one department and thereby reducing overlap and duplication, which is a tremendous way to save money.

The Department of Public Works and Government Services was formed last year to provide from one source a range of essential services in support of all other government programs. The amalgamation was achieved by orders in council but this bill was required to create the new department in statute. The department brings together four common service organizations. One major component of the new department is the former department of supply and services which was the government's internal service organization. The other major component is the former public works department which administers a wide range of federal buildings and properties. The new department also

incorporates the former government telecommunications agency and the translation bureau.

I know that most Canadians have heard the phrase public works and government services but I think it is fair to say many of them wonder what those phrases mean and exactly what the new department does.

I would like to take a few moments to outline the responsibilities of the new department and to explain how it affects the way government operates and how it affects Canadians.

The Department of Public Works and Government Services is the Government of Canada's chief purchasing agent, publisher, banker, accountant and paymaster. It provides office accommodation, real estate, design and construction, telecommunications and translation services for the Government of Canada and for other agencies as well.

We issue about \$200 million payments a year on behalf of the Canada Pension Plan, old age security, GST, child tax benefit, public service payroll, as well as to our suppliers. We manage the government's annual cash flow of \$1.4 trillion with an average daily balance of \$2.7 billion. Certainly one of the most popular services is issuing tax refund cheques to Canadians.

As the principal purchasing agency for the government the department buys some \$10 billion worth of products and services each year and works on major acquisition projects worth another \$23 billion. We issue on average 150,000 contracts to the private sector annually.

The department handles the purchase of 17,000 categories of goods and services. Our procurement ranges from frigates and satellites to medical supplies and food aid, to weather balloons and information technology. The department buys for more than 150 federal departments and agencies.

Our new government telecommunications and infomatic service is the lead agency in moving the government toward the better service and lower costs which can be achieved through automation and electronic interaction.

Translation is provided in the official languages of Canada and some 150 other languages and dialects. Our experts also provide interpretation services for some 40 languages including sign language. The department fields over 150,000 inquiries every year regarding precise terminology.

[Translation]

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that I made a statement in the House yesterday. On behalf of all my colleagues I spoke in praise of the services that interpreters, translators and terminol-