

Return showing the number of buildings, or portions of buildings, rented or occupied by the government for offices or other purposes, in Ottawa, outside the departmental buildings; from whom rented, terms of lease or leases, and rent being paid for each.

He said: My object in making this motion is to ascertain the number of buildings or other apartments rented by the government and used for government purposes, from whom they are rented, the rent that is paid, and the terms of the leases. I do so because of the rumours that have been current for some time, that the government have rented many buildings or portions of buildings which are not suitable for the public requirements, that they are rented from political friends, and that exorbitant rents are being paid. I am told that there is no provision in most of these buildings for protecting valuable papers and other goods belonging to the government, from the danger of fire. I do not know how far these rumours are correct, and I make this motion so that we may get the correct information. If it is true, that we are paying very heavy rents for these buildings, and that it has cost considerable to fit them up for the needs of the government, it seems to me that it would be much better and wiser for the government to buy land and erect buildings suitable for the needs of the country. They could be made fireproof, and we would save a very heavy outlay in rents. After I get this information, if I am correctly informed, I may follow it with another motion later on. Now, I have heard it said by supporters of the government that we cannot get land in Ottawa on which to erect public buildings. Well, the longer it is put off the more difficult it will be to acquire land. It is true, the government might be obliged to pay a pretty good figure for suitable land; but I imagine that they would pay a smaller figure now than they would be likely to do fifteen or twenty years hence. I have often thought that the time will come when it will be almost compulsory on the government, in order to provide office room, to purchase the piece of land from the Langevin block to O'Connor street, and fill it with one large block. It would certainly greatly enhance the appearance of the government grounds, and the buildings surrounding them. There are other places where buildings might be erected, such as Nepean Point and a portion of Major Hill Park. It is for the purpose of drawing attention to this matter and of putting ourselves in the position to be able to determine whether it would be the part of wisdom or otherwise for the government to purchase grounds on which to erect new buildings or whether it would be better that they should continue the present system of renting buildings from outside parties, that I make this motion.

The **MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS**. (Hon. James Sutherland). I should be very pleased indeed to bring down the return called for by this motion. I agree with the

hon. gentleman (Mr. Sproule) that it is in the public interest that this House should be possessed of all the information obtainable on the subject. My hon. friend has referred to the splendid site obtainable on Wellington street, and I agree with him that it would be a great improvement and add greatly to the appearance of the parliamentary grounds and buildings, that we should procure that site. But there are one or two rather serious objections raised. One is the heavy expenditure we would have to incur, owing to the valuable buildings that have been erected there within the past few years, and another and a more serious one is that unless we have the whole block from Wellington to Sparks street we would always be liable to injury from fire communicated from the other blocks and the safety of our valuable records and books would be endangered. There is also a serious objection to our taking Major's Hill Park. I doubt very much if the hon. members of this House would like to see that beautiful park covered with buildings. It is certainly a fine breathing spot for the citizens of Ottawa and visitors and members of the House. Parks are a great necessity in a growing city, besides being a great luxury to the people. However, the suggestion is well worthy of consideration. The hon. gentleman is perfectly right when he says that the time has arrived when this House must seriously consider the erection of departmental buildings so that public business may be carried on more conveniently than it is now. I have not the figures and therefore cannot make a fair estimate at present, but if it be the case, as the hon. gentleman says, that we are paying now in rents and other expenses more than the interest on capital and maintenance would cost us, if we purchased a site and erected new departmental buildings, we certainly should not hesitate doing so. I am not aware that either the previous or the present government has been guilty of paying excessive rents because buildings rented by the government happen to be owned by political friends. I think that the buildings required by some of the departments since this administration has taken office, have been rented from political opponents, and I have no doubt that the best bargain possible was made by the officials of the government. However, it is a very important and serious question, this question of the desirability of procuring property on which to put up better buildings than we now have, and I am satisfied that it is in the interests of the country that these buildings should be erected as soon as possible. This matter has in the short time that I have been in the department, received some attention from myself and my officials. During the past few weeks we have gone into it to a considerable extent in order to ascertain what properties were available and what the buildings would cost. I hope that even during this session we may be able to report some progress so