

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Mills:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister would permit a short question on this bill before my colleague begins to speak.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** That would require consent of the House.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, this is a complex bill. It is a technical bill. I confess to the minister that I do not understand every aspect of it.

My concern about this bill is this. Who would ultimately have the final say on the disposition of property assets of the government. Does this bill basically put a more dominant position to the Treasury Board and the Treasury Board minister, or does it decentralize the disposition of lands and give the line departments that may have land as assets the individual capability to do these dispositions on their own?

If that is the case, my concern would be who or what mechanism is in place that would audit and make sure that in the disposition of Crown land or Crown assets the taxpayer is getting fair market value. For example, if I decide to sell a piece of real estate, and I am not sure of its value, I get three independent appraisals to make sure because I am not an expert in land that the real dollar value is there.

Could the minister please take a couple of minutes to explain that to me?

**Mr. Loiselle:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It is a very vital and a very central question to this bill.

In the past Treasury Board has played a very centralized role, and part of the problems we had in managing these areas throughout Canada was that everything had to go through Ottawa.

The purpose of the bill is indeed to decentralize it. Treasury Board maintains of course its over-all responsibility but sets the pattern according to which these transactions have to be executed and stipulates the methods that will be used to judge the results of the transaction and precisely the kinds of interrogation the hon. member had. Therefore this bill is a considerable improvement.

We feel that we hire good managers in the regions. There are rules in this bill whereby the departments are finally responsible for the land or property. They have to offer it first if it is not used for their own policy reasons to the provincial government, then to the municipal government, and eventually to the general public.

Rules are set. These are guidelines, but decisions are taken in the regions and the proper procedure of going for bids and so on and so forth is fully respected. Basically we are going, apart from some restrictions to give the first go at it to the other governments, with the best methods used in the private sector.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Madam Speaker, after our short meeting in committee, we were readily convinced that changes were necessary in the way the federal government sells and disposes of property. When I was a member of the Quebec National Assembly, I found that when letters patent had to be transferred, we had to wait months and months because of the research involved. It was very frustrating for people to have to wait so long, all because of a lot of what I would call red tape.

As my colleague from Toronto pointed out, this is a highly technical bill, and we certainly do not claim to know every aspect of this legislation. I spoke with the minister's senior officials who were very knowledgeable, but there is a limit to what one can explain and absorb.

It was explained to us that these changes had been made in several Commonwealth countries and that we had to take advantage of the latest developments in communications and information processing. I am sure the department was right to propose these changes, but I would like to point out that the Auditor General makes annual reports, and many people are concerned about the way the government is proceeding. Some people feel their rights have been violated. Here in Parliament our role is above all to ensure that everything is transparent. Not only must everything be transparent, it must be seen to be so.

[*English*]

On this particular part I would like to know the minister's opinion and if the officers of his department could look into it.