

Premises (after 1925)

From the date when the Department of External Affairs moved into the East Block in 1914, there was an unremitting scramble to gain more and more space for its ever-expanding needs. At the end of the War, it became necessary, first, to move the space-demanding Passport Office out of its cramped quarters in the East Block into outside quarters, (1919).

But even with the hiving-off of the Passport Office, the remainder of the Department, with an ever-increasing clerical staff, accumulating archives, and a cypher-establishment, sought more rooms. In this struggle it confronted similar demands or encroachments of various other Departments of Government accommodated in the East Block.

In a memorandum for the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett), dated February 21, 1931, Dr. O.D. Skelton, the Under-Secretary, wrote:

When in 1912 the office of Secretary of State for External Affairs was established and it was provided that the office should be held by "the member of the King's Privy Council for Canada holding the recognized position of First Minister", rooms were assigned in the East Block in close proximity to those of the Prime Minister. Unfortunately the space in the East Block has always been extremely limited, owing to the fact that old established departments were firmly ensconced there, and the development of the Department has been seriously hampered. With the growing importance of the place which Canada holds in inter-Imperial and international affairs, the work of the Department has multiplied. The secretarial, accounting, filing and other staff of the Department is working in congested quarters such as find no parallel in other Departments.

Dr. Skelton's memorandum then reviewed the usurpations of other Departments of space earlier promised for External Affairs, and approved by the Prime Minister the previous