

*Regional Economic Expansion*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before the hon. member continues, perhaps the Chair might say it is in some difficulty in that the motion before the House reads:

That an order of the House do issue for copies of the signed agreement and all other documents relating to the offer of a guaranteed loan made by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion to the Parc Samuel Holland Hotel of Quebec.

It seems to me that both the previous speaker and the present speaker in this debate have gone rather far afield from that motion. I suppose the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) is hoping that there will be a conclusion in respect of what he has proposed. Therefore, I suggest it is the duty of the Chair to try to hold the debate within the realm of the motion presented by the hon. member. It seems to me that to range far and wide over the operations of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, unless it can be tied to or kept in line with the loan made to the Parc Samuel Holland Hotel of Quebec, would be to do a disservice to the motion and to the hon. member.

**Mr. Symes:** I take your comments under advisement, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

● (1750)

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Bellechasse on the point of order raised by the Chair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to interrupt needlessly the present speaker, but I highly appreciate your remarks. The two members who followed me considerably wandered from the motion.

The object of the motion is to facilitate the access to departmental papers and information.

I think that the motion is particularly interesting and I ask the support of hon. members to have those papers tabled.

I thank the Chair for its comments and I am sure that the subsequent speeches will deal exclusively with the motion.

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) rising on the point of order raised by the Chair?

**Mr. Jerome:** Only with regard to clarification of your intervention, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the concern of the Chair in respect of speeches relating to the subject matter of the motion. However, in private members' hour there is always a general question of principle involved, aside from the substantive motion put forward by an hon. member, particularly on Thursdays when we deal with the production of documents. There is not only the question of the production of documents specifically related to the motion, but there is always in this hour the question of when a government should release documents and when it

[Mr. Symes.]

should not. That was the tenor of the speech of the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster). I would urge upon Your Honour that these remarks be taken in the context that hon. members refer not only to the subject matter of the motion but should also be given an opportunity to discuss the principle of whether or not documents should be released.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I think the remarks of the hon. member for Sudbury are well taken. Certainly, it is not a procedure which happens so often that it would interfere with the rules which have been laid down. However, it seems to me it is a difficult matter when a member wishes to pursue a quest for information, as the hon. member for Bellechasse is doing, if he suddenly finds himself confronted with a great, over-all debate. Obviously, hon. members can see I am in a state of perplexity on this matter. I recognize the merit of what the hon. member for Sudbury says, but I think in fairness to the hon. member for Bellechasse I must ask that the debate be as restricted as possible and as relevant as possible to his motion.

**Mr. Symes:** In view of those comments, Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. However, I believe the point I am trying to make is relevant to the motion. While the hon. member for Bellechasse is worried about particular documents which relate to a particular problem, I am arguing on the same principle, the principle of access to information. We are not getting it in this House. I was using the example of a document which came into my hands which is not public and which would have been of immense value to the committee on regional development. In that sense I agree with the hon. member for Bellechasse that we should have more access to this type of information, and I do not agree with the strictures elaborated by the hon. member for Algoma. I shall resume my seat in order that we may make a decision on this motion.

**Mr. B. Keith Penner (Thunder Bay):** Mr. Speaker, I shall keep in mind your direction to the House about relevancy and abide by it. However, I think we should bear in mind the remarks of the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) on the subject of general information. I should like to speak at the outset, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Development, about information which comes to government and does not ordinarily make its way into the House of Commons or become accessible to Members of Parliament.

There is a very happy piece of information which we are told has leaked out of that very secret cabinet room, which apparently indicates that this government gives the very highest priority to regional development. I take it that this means consideration by the Treasury Board, which sometimes can be a little tough in respect of some programs. The information is that this department is to be given every consideration so that the important job which is being done in respect of developing the various regions of this country can be done in a much more vigorous way.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Penner:** I would be delighted to accept a question from the venerable hon. member from Winnipeg North Centre.