

*National Capital***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

NATIONAL CAPITAL**ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE TO STUDY
DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION AND
OPERATIONS OF COMMISSION**

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council) moved:

That a special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons be appointed to review and report upon matters bearing upon the development of the national capital region, including the programs and operations of the National Capital Commission;

That 15 members of the House of Commons to be designated by the House at a later date be the members on the part of this House of the special joint committee;

That the said committee have the power to send for persons, papers and records and examine witnesses; to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House; to report from time to time; to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be deemed advisable; to delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House; and to adjourn from place to place within Canada; and

That a message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose, and to select, if the Senate deems it advisable, some of its members to act on the proposed special joint committee.

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak for long.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the support of the opposition. I want to hear the views of as many members as possible during this rather limited debate. I should like to thank all members of parliament from the national capital region and, I might add, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), for their general support of our objective of creating a capital of two official languages where Canadians will feel at home no matter what their cultural or regional backgrounds might be.

The government welcomes the establishment of this committee. It looks forward to the results of the committee's studies and the committee's recommendations. There are several reasons why the committee study is important and timely. For one thing, the deliberations of the committee will focus national attention on the capital itself. Parliament itself, rather than the government or some branch or branches of it, should be the judge of how the capital should be further developed. This committee will represent both Houses of Parliament and, more than that, all regions of Canada. The national capital must be a place for all Canadians; therefore we want the views of all Canadians, not just those who represent residents of the national capital region or even those who represent the two provinces which contain the capital geographically, though members from the region have a special responsibility as the daily lives of their constituents are intimately affected.

The government is looking for recommendations from the committee which will provide a consensus on and impetus toward what our capital should look like 25 years from now. We are looking for fresh and lively ideas on

[Mr. Elzinga.]

how to enhance the magnificent setting around us and to try to make it reflect to the world and to ourselves what Canadian nationhood means. Still another reason for looking forward to this study is that we have not had a parliamentary inquiry on the capital since 1956. The parliamentary committee of 1956 made significant contributions to the development of the capital and consequently, I submit, to the nation as a whole. The committee's recommendations led to passage of the National Capital Act in 1958. This act provides the authority for the National Capital Commission to develop the capital as the guardian of and spokesman for the national interest. The committee of 1956 also made recommendations which resulted in increased financial backing for the commission's activities.

● (1510)

Perhaps I might remind the House of some of the major projects which the 1956 committee helped to bring about: the greenbelt around Ottawa, the expansion of Gatineau Park, the exercise of federal policy through the ownership and use of property, the construction of major traffic arteries, the addition of more bridges across the Ottawa River, and the continuation of the railway relocation program. The results of the committee's work are all around for us to see today.

I think that all parliaments and administrations since before the Second World War have been committed to the building of a capital befitting this country. Moreover, they have provided the support, financial and political, to the National Capital Commission and its predecessors and other departments and agencies concerned in carrying out this commitment. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government established the Ottawa improvement commission in 1899 and it built the driveway beside the Rideau Canal. The driveway exists today almost in its original form. This commission was replaced in 1927 by the old federal district commission. It is interesting to note that even then the commission was given authority for a district spanning both sides of the Ottawa River.

In 1958 the federal district commission was replaced by the National Capital Commission and parliament renewed the authority for the commission to take responsibility for a national capital region taking in parts of both Ontario and Quebec. The boundaries of the commission are set out in appendix to the National Capital Act proclaimed in 1959. Twenty-five years ago Jacques Greber produced his commissioned plan for the national capital. I think it stands as a tribute to Greber, parliament and governments since then, that his plan has been substantially implemented. We now have the greenbelt, parks and parkways that Greber said we could have if we worked at it.

The capital has grown faster and farther than Greber foresaw. Greber anticipated a population of 700,000 in the national capital region by 1990. We are just 40,000 short of that figure now, 15 years before the predicted date. The National Capital Commission now foresees a population of about 1.4 million by the turn of this century. We now are at the point where we need a new concept, a new thrust, a new development plan for the capital in the next 25 years. What better place to find solutions than in the body which is central—I use "central" in every sense—to the capital, parliament itself?