

Oral Questions

systems of a rather decrepit building here in Ottawa, Centennial Towers are gradually flickering out, such as the elevators and electrical system. This building is reported to be the latest instrument by which the government can extend its largesse to Robert Campeau, a needy builder of Liberal persuasion. Is the Minister of Public Works conversant with this proposed giveaway arrangement? If so, will the minister tell the House what the proposed value is of the package to Mr. Campeau? I have heard \$40 million or \$50 million, for a building worth \$5 million or \$6 million.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the Department of Public Works is negotiating with the Campeau Corporation on the continued use of the building. The negotiations will take into account any necessary changes that are required if the building continues to be used for government purposes.

I do not have the particulars of the cost of bringing the building up to government standards or to local standards. But any such contract, as I am sure the honourable member knows from previous experience, would have to be open to full scrutiny and scrutinized by Treasury Board as well.

REASONS FOR GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): That is what worries me, Madam Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacKay: —when I look at les Terrasses de la Chaudière and other of these past horror stories involving taxpayers' money. I understand that the proposed cost of renovations will be about \$15 million, which costs will probably be recovered by Mr. Campeau in blended payments.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacKay: Since there are approximately 250,000 square feet of unused space in the Portage building, why is there such a great necessity to extend government largesse to Mr. Campeau? Is he too affected by this budget to that extent?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I suppose the gentleman to whom the hon. member has referred as an officer of a corporation is subject to any general change in the budget that affects any corporation in Canada. In so far as the use of government buildings both in Hull and Ottawa is concerned, I can advise the hon. gentleman that, after a review of the accommodation needs of the various ministries in the government during the last year, a number are being studied for use in Ottawa and Hull. Announcements will probably be made within the next few months.

AIRPORTS

FUTURE OF LAND EXPROPRIATED FOR MIRABEL AIRPORT

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Public Works. I hope the minister will read page 5322 of *Hansard* for December 4, 1980. At that time I asked the minister about some 79,000 acres of Mirabel peripheral lands. The minister could not make up his mind then, and said that the cabinet document that had been leaked was going before a committee of the government last December 12. The industrial plans and parks have proved to be a complete failure and, by admission of the government's own internal review, the land is deteriorating.

Several groups joined forces last week, including 400 farmers who want to continue farming. Is the government now willing to respond to those farmers and other residents and, is it prepared to return that land to these people? The farmers are prepared to pay the price they received for this land so they can regain their livelihood and the region can begin to rebuild its economy—

An hon. Member: Question, please.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We only have until three o'clock, Les.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I am sure that with the research the hon. member has directed to this problem he will have seen that the government has set up a land corporation which is comprised of representatives who were suggested to us by various local organizations, including the local university. That corporation has been receiving submissions over the last few months, not only from farmers but from businesses, the local council, and all interested parties. A plan has been prepared and this will be presented to cabinet within the next two weeks.

REASONS FOR GOVERNMENT DELAY

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, the minister still cannot make up his mind. His own report states that local residents have suffered significant losses due to destabilization of the area. Why will the government not take immediate action, especially when studies on the situation, signed by the minister, recommend that the land be returned? These studies were completed over a year ago, the farmers are willing to pay for the land, and community leaders in the area say the delay is having a damaging effect. What is the government waiting for? Why is it waiting for this commission headed by one Jean-Pierre Goyer?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. gentleman to have his researcher get my answer to the question he asked me last year. My answer was to the effect that was because of its impact on the local community and our wishes, as a government, to be sensitive to the local needs and designs of that plan, that we