

*Government Orders*

to be moving ahead. But there seems to be a failure in terms of the process.

Here we have a very valuable piece of property. There are claims that there is some sort of contamination on or underneath that property. There is a tremendous effect on the surrounding environment. There have been calls by members of the community for the government to undertake some sort of environmental review assessment. The government is quite slow in its action and as a result it is causing quite a bit of alarm in the community and a lot of frustration.

Just looking at those two examples it seems to me the government has been slow in its action. I will mention another example. We have millions of square feet of office space in our city which are empty. Many of those offices are owned and operated by the federal government.

This is a time when the departments of the federal government are looking for space. But it seems that the first thing we do is look at the market and run out to rent the first available piece of real estate in terms of office space. We move in without really taking the time and energy to look at what we have as a federal government in terms of office space.

As a result we have empty buildings owned by the federal government while we are using taxpayers' money to go out and rent other offices at market value. That is good and bad. It is good in the sense that we are injecting money into the community. I should be very grateful for that.

It is bad when we look at it in the sense that we have hundreds of empty offices out there that are owned by the federal government. Here, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about proper real estate management, one would ask; why would the government not have some sort of a data bank in every region and all across the country, so that we would know exactly how many square feet we have in terms of office space, in terms of commercial space, in terms of residential space and in terms of land? From the data base you could determine your needs, not your needs two months from now or two years from now, but analyze the needs over five years, 10 years, 25 years, and for that matter even over 50 years. You are then properly managing your assets in terms of real estate

holdings, and in parallel with that you would look at your requirements, and you match the two together.

• (1320)

That is what I would call proper real estate management, proper land management, efficient management.

We have to streamline our system, Mr. Speaker. I mean, this is fine, this is a first step. But I did not see anywhere in the bill where it really does specifically address this whole question of government needs and government requirements over the long term.

I was the critic for public works and I was extremely impressed by the quality of administrators, the quality of public servants in our government. We have the finest public servants anywhere in the world. But over the past number of years we have been tying them down to their chairs, tying them down with bureaucratic red tape and not giving them the freedom to present our government and our House with a good idea that could be used in the best interest of Canadians.

I would go on and outline some other terrible things that have been happening in land management and real estate management, but I would like to contain my comments to the issues very close to my heart and to my city. That is why I have given the example of the Sparks Street Mall, with all of those empty buildings sitting there, not being put on the block so a tenant could move in and rent them. I also gave the example of the LeBreton Flats where the government has not yet moved on an environmental review assessment so they can proceed with some sort of a balanced development. I wonder how many other examples there are elsewhere across the country that would fit this particular description.

To sell or not to sell is, of course, a hypothetical question. I think that if the government has a piece of property that is of value to the interests of Canadians, that piece of property should remain in the hands of the federal government with an option, with the opportunity and the possibility of profit in the future. Because if a home today is worth \$100,000, tomorrow it is going to be worth \$105,000 or the year after it might be worth \$110,000. So there is no loss in terms of the government interest but the government interests have gained as we go further into the next decade.