

Government Orders

is, indeed, the word to use in an economy or a government in a province the size of British Columbia, compared to the Government of Canada. If we are looking at \$500 million in the upward adjustment of fees over three years, what kind of a total we are looking at for the Government of Canada? It could be extremely significant. In that case, of course, I am sure there was discussion with the people being affected, as well, but it did not have any downward effect on the increases that were being made.

I just do not know about the changes in land management. I suppose, from the reading of the proposed legislation and the library report, it is simply doing as the minister said and as the report says, providing in legislation for what is currently the practice. If that is the case, then I think it is welcome and it is time we did it. I have no reason for thinking that it is anything other than that.

When it comes to charging interest on overdue accounts, it is hard to argue against that. People should pay their bills on time. We have to pay interest everywhere else, why not pay interest to the government as well? I am not thinking of individuals such as you and I, Mr. Speaker. I am thinking of the large corporations which make a practice of cash management to the benefit of the corporation and stretch everything as far as they can, particularly when it comes to paying the government and they take advantage of that. In these cases, it could be a significant contribution to government revenue and one that I would be in support of.

Again, as I have said earlier, to the extent that it is dealing with recommendations from the Auditor General, we can all be happy that the government is finally moving to legislate the changes. Some of the changes have already been made over the last two or three years, but the legislation has never caught up with the changes that the Auditor General or the Public Accounts Committee recommended. It is good housekeeping and it is good to have it done so the government will be acting in line with the Financial Administration Act and the Financial Administration Act is in keeping with government procedures.

Clause 6 deals with the increases in fees for services. Of course, my question there is, just how much money are we talking about. With \$500 million in the province of British Columbia, here it could be several billions a

year that the government is talking about getting out of the economy.

We do not know where these fees are going to be increased and who this is going to affect. There are some fees that can be increased, and quite properly, from a commercial point of view. A Crown corporation or a government service that is strictly commercially oriented should be paying the cost of that, and an increase is reasonable. But sometimes, it is hard to differentiate between a public service and a commercial operation.

• (1620)

For example, while Canada Post is not one of the ones listed in the schedule in the notes I have, there is a difference within the corporation of the service that it provides to the extent that, for example, it distributes and handles junk mail. That is strictly commercial. That kind of operation should be covering the cost of delivering so-called junk mail. To the extent that it provides rural mail delivery, then there is a service involved. It is not a service that necessarily should be carrying its own way in every division. For Canada Post to be operating the way it does with a policy of closing down rural post offices, of cutting back on rural mail delivery, and of privatizing the provision of the service of rural mail, I think is not in keeping with a crown corporation that is designed at least in part to provide a service to the public.

VIA Rail is another good example. The operations of parts of VIA Rail were cut down or done away with when it was providing a service, not necessarily a commercially successful service, but nevertheless providing the transportation service of people and/or goods. That service is important to a country such as Canada, a country that stretches from east to west for some 4,000 miles and that needs that kind of a link to keep us an east-west country, as opposed to one where the transportation links might very well become north-south links without the tying together effect of a national railroad or a couple of national railroads.

Therefore, there are differences. We cannot say that a Crown corporation has to provide that service at a profit unless we look at the various sectors of the operation of that Crown operation. While we might admit that some services can be delivered at a price that will provide a profit, there are others where that should not be the case, where the government should be prepared to provide that service as a means of doing something for