

of the questions and suggestions by the staff and the scientists have gone unheeded. They are still in the dark about the structure of the agency, reporting responsibilities, future prospects for advancement in the profession and what their career and earning potential will be.

• (1030)

Until the hearings of the legislative committee began, they even had no assurance that they would not be forced to move first to temporary quarters in Montreal, work out of cardboard boxes and then move again 18 months later to St. Hubert. That concern has now been resolved.

However, other concerns still remain. They still do not have any assurances about the provision of language training for themselves and their families, about career opportunities for spouses, even about the classification of their own jobs.

Let me address the amendments that were proposed to the legislative committee by the Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada and that reflect the same concerns as were expressed by the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Motion No. 2 simply provides that in addition to entering into contracts and agreements, the agency may also assume existing obligations of the existing programs. This really is just an amendment for greater certainty, as drafters of legislation like to say. I am not sure why it would be a problem for the government to accept that motion. Perhaps one of the members on the opposite side could explain it to me, if there is a problem.

The second amendment, and that is Motion No. 3, is fundamental to the concerns of the professionals working for the government. I suggest that it is fundamental to their ultimate decision about whether to stay with the agency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the member. The House has no doubt noticed that the hon. member for Ottawa West is making a summary of all her motions. I gather there is consent to allow her to do that, even

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though we are discussing Motion Nos. 1 and 2. She is doing it in the interest of saving time.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my understanding of what motivated the hon. member in making such a presentation, and, of course, we have no objection to that, if it is in the interest of the House to proceed in such a way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well. The member for Ottawa West.

Mrs. Catterall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not been watching my time carefully so you might signal me a minute before.

The purpose of Motion No. 3 is to protect the status that most of the scientists, researchers and technical professionals now enjoy with the National Research Council. NRC has scientific and technical positions that are based less on paper qualification than on experience and performance, recognizing the unique nature of science and the excellence of the results that can be produced. This system is not unique to NRC. It also exists at the Department of National Defence, and perhaps other federal agencies or Crown corporations.

The problem with the existing legislation is that it tries to squeeze these scientists and technical professionals artificially into the rigid engineering classifications of the public service. The paper credential requirements limit their opportunities for advancement because they may be grandfathered in their current positions but that would not apply to subsequent positions they might legitimately expect to move into.

It would also force most of them into pay scales that are well below their current earning potential. I have seen specific examples of this coming from space agency staff. The bill deals only partly and very unsatisfactorily with this issue and it deals with it only for the few scientists in the astronaut category—those who will be going into space to conduct their research.

I say it is unsatisfactory because it allows for the possibility of special appointments under terms and conditions provided by Order in Council. It deprives the persons appointed in that way of the protection of the Public Service Staff Relations Act while treating them in every other way as public service employees.