

Ontario — Dominion public buildings — improvements, repairs, etc., \$115,000.

Mr. MANION: I wish to refer to an unfortunate situation that exists in one of the public buildings at Fort William. I have had it drawn to my attention on a number of occasions by the people of Fort William and by those who are affected by the conditions which have prevailed. It is seventeen years since any improvement or enlargement was made to the post office, and yet the business has increased very greatly since that time. The revenue from the post office, according to the last report, is between \$72,000 and \$73,000 per annum. As to the ability of the officials in the post office to carry on under the conditions prevailing, while I do not wish to quote them unnecessarily or to bring them into the discussion in any way that would do them harm, I have gone out of my way to ask their opinion and they are agreed that the post office really requires some form of enlargement in order to cope with the business that has to be done. Since 1911, when, so far as I can find out, the last improvement was made, the population has greatly increased, the mails have doubled, c.o.d. and parcel post have been added, I believe, and there is required additional accommodation for parcel post packages, extra wickets, and more lobby space, because at Christmas it is practically impossible to cope with the heavy business owing to the crowding. I do not wish to take up the time of the committee further. I understand that the minister is familiar with the situation; it has been taken up with him by the board of trade, I believe, or the city council, and I am bringing it to his attention now simply for the sake of the service. Indeed, that is the only ground upon which I would dare to press any expenditure of any kind. But due to the long time since any enlargement has been made to the post office at Fort William, and to the very real need of additional accommodation due on account of the overcrowding which the people using the post office have to endure, I would ask the minister to give this matter his attention at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. ELLIOTT: Representations have been made in the matter; my attention was personally drawn to it when I was in Fort William last fall, and it was suggested that further accommodation be provided. The matter is now under consideration, I can assure my hon. friend.

Mr. McQUARRIE: Is this just a vote to cover contingencies? If so, would the minister give details of the expenditure last year?

[The Chairman.]

Mr. ELLIOTT: This has been an annual vote for a number of years. The expenditure in 1922-23 was \$109,000; 1923-24, \$102,000; 1924-25, \$97,000; 1925-26, \$103,000; 1926-27, \$114,993.

Mr. McQUARRIE: What buildings does it cover?

Mr. ELLIOTT: I have a long list here, which includes examining warehouses, the office of the assistant receiver general, various postal stations in Toronto—

Mr. McQUARRIE: I do not want the whole list.

Mr. KAISER: This is a general vote, but has the minister in mind any particular places where he is going to expend this money? If so, I should like to draw to his attention the condition in the post office in the city of Oshawa. In the first place, let me say that the customs house accommodation in the city of Oshawa is entirely inadequate to serve the needs of the people. A customs revenue of \$12,000,000 is collected annually in Oshawa, and the government has not provided its officials with proper accommodation for carrying on their work. The same is true of the post office. I have no doubt that the postmaster who has recently been appointed is endeavouring to do his best, but under the conditions that obtain there it is impossible for the best service to be given, and there are bound to be difficulties all over the district where mails are distributed. I would respectfully urge upon the minister the necessity of affording relief and providing the necessary accommodation and equipment there to serve that large district.

Mr. ELLIOTT: I am aware that the conditions in Oshawa are much as my hon. friend indicates. Business there has increased very greatly, and I shall be glad to give consideration to the matter that he mentions. I might add that this amount is not allotted to any particular place, but is used where repairs for buildings are found necessary. There has been spent in Ontario annually for the last number of years a sum running from \$112,000 to \$115,000 to keep the government buildings in a state of reasonable repair.

Mr. KAISER: Will the minister look into the claim which the city of Oshawa has against the department for arrears of local improvement tax, amounting to \$87.35? I see no reason why he should not attend to this gigantic matter and get it off our hands.

Item agreed to.