

Chrétien) in his position as Acting Solicitor General during the absence of the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan). I would like to thank the Solicitor General for staying for the adjournment debate this evening.

The Minister of Justice knew nothing of the case, and, apparently, neither did the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove), who tried to answer a supplementary question I put to him.

I took this matter up again on March 9, when the Solicitor General was in the House. I asked him about the plan to move the headquarters of "E" Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police out of the city of Victoria. In my question I said:

I understand the Solicitor General has informed the media that this projected move is by no means certain. However, RCMP senior officers have said the move is on. Would the Solicitor General clarify this matter, please?

His reply was:

Madam Speaker, if the hon. member would tell me which members of the RCMP were saying that, I will get in touch with them and tell them the move is not on, not finally settled, and will not be until I have had an opportunity to discuss this with the provincial attorney general.

Those are pretty strong words from the Solicitor General, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, he did not know anything about any press releases which had been issued, nor did he have any information about a move taking place. As far as he was concerned it was not on, it was not settled and he was going to discuss it with the provincial attorney general.

His answer to my supplementary question on the same subject as to whether there would be impact studies done on the move before it took place was that he did not undertake that there would be specific impact studies undertaken. He ended his answer by saying:

That is not a decision which will be made until I have consulted on the matter with the attorney general of British Columbia.

It is interesting to note that this was on March 9, when clearly the Solicitor General did not know the RCMP were even thinking of moving. But, on March 4 the RCMP in Victoria issued a press release which stated:

Deputy Commissioner G. W. Reed, Commanding Officer of the RCMP, "E" Division, British Columbia, confirms that reorganization of the RCMP in British Columbia is planned and part of this reorganization would be the establishment of the headquarters in Vancouver.

This reorganization is still in the planning stages and will take place over a comparatively long range period of time and the gradual movement of the headquarters from Victoria to Vancouver will not likely commence until the end of 1981 at the earliest and proceed over a two or three-year period.

After his bold words in the House of Commons, the Solicitor General roared like a lion and said if I would only tell him who had informed me of this he would get in touch with them and tell them the move is not on. He said he was really going to straighten them out. He then went out to Victoria and apparently he got straightened out by the RCMP.

The next thing we heard from him in the House of Commons was on March 18. I asked him if "E" Division was going to move and his answer was:

Madam Speaker, what I had in mind was that the move would be phased in over a three-year period—that there would be normal attrition and transfers

during that period, and that all of the officials working in the program who wanted to do so would have a priority for transferring to other federal jobs—

In my supplementary question I said:

On Monday he told reporters:

"They were fully consulted about it during the last two years of planning."

However, the Hon. Allan Williams, Attorney General of B.C., stated today:

"To suggest that we have been consulted is inaccurate and misleading. This is a callous and insensitive move and I oppose it until it is supported by an economic and social impact study."

That brings us fairly well up to the present. I might say that the press release, issued in Victoria on March 4, five days before the Solicitor General knew anything about it, caused a great deal of concern on the west coast. The mayor of Victoria sent me a copy of his letter to the Hon. Robert P. Kaplan on March 5, which said:

This letter is to object strenuously on behalf of myself and the mayors of Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt to this proposed move.

● (2205)

The local newspapers reported the following day that the acting mayor, alderman Bill McElroy, said:

This is not the stupidest decision the federal government has ever made, but it's definitely in the top two.

The adverse criticism continued.

We are different in Victoria, I believe, in that we are very proud of the environment, the town we live in, and our community. People do not try to alter communities without a great deal of preparation. An impact study is absolutely vital. It should check into whether there will be a serious social impact for over 200 employees, and an economic impact on those who will pay for this move, considering that only three years ago \$4 million or \$5 million was paid for the buildings they moved into two years ago.

I would also suggest to the Solicitor General that he might consider polling his employees on their positions which he has now caved-in about and who will have to move whether they like it or not. Apparently he does not want to do any studies. The problem there is that the Solicitor General, if he looks back on the history of "E" division, will find that at one time they were grouped in one headquarters. In 1976 they were broken into two districts. Now you are going to put them back and get right back to your 1976 problems. There will be no change. The problem will simply be transferred from Victoria to Vancouver. This will mean there will be two problems: the problem of 1976 in Victoria plus the problem there will be in Vancouver.

I would submit to the Solicitor General that if he would have an impact study done on the economics of this, and would check into his own "E" division out there to find out if this is really in the best interests of the RCMP or only in the best interests of some individuals, I think he would find that his problem is not administrative, but one of personnel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has now expired. The hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan).