

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 26, 1974

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PARLIAMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEMBERSHIP OF ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PARLIAMENTARY ACCOMMODATION

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the House will doubtless remember that on July 20, 1973, I announced our intention of expropriating the land enclosed within Wellington, Elgin, Sparks and Bank streets in order that we might enlarge parliamentary facilities and protect the Parliament Hill environment. I also announced that we would try to get the co-operation of all parties of the House in creating an Advisory Commission on Parliamentary Accommodation to determine what facilities Parliament will need to operate efficiently in the future.

Since then, we have met the first requirements of the Expropriation Act and have made offers, as the fact requires, to all former owners. We are now studying, with them, the administrative steps to be taken to ensure the administration of real estate, and, especially, to make sure that the unique and attractive aspect of the Mall is preserved, an aspect on which I insisted in my previous statement.

[English]

Thanks to the co-operation of all parties, Mr. Speaker, I am in the happy position today to be able to announce the membership of the Advisory Commission on Parliamentary Accommodation. The commission will be comprised of members of all parties and both Houses and will include former distinguished parliamentarians. I trust that the Speakers of both Houses will accept to serve as ex officio members of the commission. The chairman will be a former cabinet minister and former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Hon. Douglas C. Abbott. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will table after my brief statement the order in council and the names of the 16 members of the commission.

● (1110)

I believe all members will share my pleasure that we have been able to secure such distinguished participants to pursue this historic and important task on our behalf. It is vital that parliament, as the paramount legislative body of the nation, should be extended the full facilities it requires to perform effectively in this modern age. It is expected that in arriving at its conclusions the commission will look into how parliamentary needs should be met

in this country and compare with other countries with similar parliamentary institutions. Many complex problems about space, convenience, tradition and effectiveness will have to be faced and resolved by the commission on our behalf. The commission is being asked to look into these matters and to advise on the amount and type of accommodation and facilities, and how these will interrelate in order to permit parliament to operate effectively in the future.

The first stage in this process was the acquisition of the land and real estate and this has now been completed. The second stage is the one I just described, namely, the definition of the needs of parliament, as will be established by the advisory commission. The third stage will be the implementation, and I trust this will be facilitated by launching a competition open to all Canadian architects for providing the most inspiring concept of parliamentary architecture. This planning will be done in conjunction with the National Capital Commission and the city of Ottawa.

As I indicated in my earlier statement, the parliament of Canada is a vital symbol and presence in our country and we intend that its expansion will enhance and protect its dignity in accordance with the fundamental position it occupies in the life of the nation.

May I therefore, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the House, wish the commission full success in its deliberations.

Mr. Walter C. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on July 20, 1973, when I spoke for the official opposition in reply to the minister's initial statement, I indicated at that time that we believe this project to be a significant development for parliament, and the calibre of the members of this special and important advisory commission honours the magnitude of the undertaking. The membership of the commission is a good balance between the various parties in the two chambers of parliament, but most important of all it represents, in the parliamentary sense, a good blend of experience on the one hand and freshness on the other.

We welcome reconfirmation of the intention to preserve the unique quality of the Sparks Street Mall which is important to the centre-town core of the national capital. We urge upon the minister, his department and the advisory commission the importance of consultation on a continuing basis with tenants and others who have an economic interest in that area because of the understandable uneasiness that can develop from an announcement of this kind.

I am sure that all of us urge upon the commission the importance of considering the changing role of the parliamentarian as one which is moving from the legislative on the one hand to a greater mixture of the legislative role and that of ombudsman on the other, where personal contact and frequent and direct communication are