

*Government Orders*

others on this side, and maybe some members on that side of the House, believe is a very significant defect in this bill in relation to clause 16(1). The minister knows that the government is on weak ground on that clause. It has been commented on before. If he has read the commentary from the Library of Parliament, if he has followed the committee, I think he senses the issue that we are getting into.

I want to ask my colleague if he thought it would be useful—the minister is hearing this as well—to amend clause 16(1). There is no regulation or statutory instrument reference. If any sales or dispositions occur, the authorization might be on the back of a telephone message slip, on a piece of paper. Presumably it is in writing or in a cabinet minute, but in any event an authorization is given with no statutory instrument or regulation. If clause 16(1) could be amended to provide, for example, that any authorization which takes place under clause 16(1) would take place by way of a statutory instrument and be deemed to be referred to either the public accounts committee or the joint committee for the scrutiny of regulations of this House, that would provide a mechanism by which Parliament could structurally *ex poste facto* oversee the kinds of transactions, which could be backroom deals, envisaged and for which the groundwork is laid by clause 16(1).

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Speaker, I think that is an excellent suggestion. Any provision or mechanism that will allow for public scrutiny, that will allow members of Parliament and others to look at or to examine in a public way the disposition of federal land or federal property is helpful.

• (1350)

My colleague makes a suggestion that would allow for the disposition of a certain piece of property or the lease of a certain building to be referred to a committee so that a committee could consider, debate and discuss the matter. Anything that would provide for that I would support.

I would also like to see a central depository where there would be a registry office of all federally owned land. Any proposed sale would have to be entered into this depository and all contracts and papers involving a particular sale or lease of a piece of federally owned land would be filed at this particular location so that members

of the public would have access in order to examine them.

I like my friend's suggestion that the section be amended to permit committee consideration and overview.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from York South—Weston. The Public Service of Canada administers these Crown assets, whether they be airports, post offices or Department of National Defence institutions and properties. We are in no way, shape or form questioning their judgment or their administrative abilities of these Crown assets.

However, if the political will of the government of the country decides that its public policy is one of dismantling, then it is the responsibility of the Public Service to follow its instruction.

I wonder if it might not be a useful exercise if we on this side of the House suggest to the public servants from coast to coast to coast, that manage and administer our Crown assets, to go through some kind of a review and see what possible mid-term or short-term use, not only for their own department but for other departmental uses, could be made of Crown lands. That way, rather than the expeditious sale of these lands, which this bill is going to provide for, it might be brought to the attention of this House some of the long range vision of the public servants that are in the field in every part of this country.

In other words, we sit here in this House and we sometimes do not fully comprehend or understand the long-term potential of a Crown land or a Crown asset whereas the public servant, because he is there might see the potential because he is part of that marketplace. Therefore, he or she may be victim of a directive of the national government and may not have recourse to present ideas to us for their long-term potential.

I would just like to have my colleague from York South—Weston react to that.

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood for asking that question. It is an excellent question.

The point he is making is that if a particular department or ministry deems a particular piece of land to be surplus, does that necessarily mean that it is surplus to the needs of all ministries and all departments?