

Supply—Public Works

than 100,000 population should be considered as cities to which access approaches from the trans-Canada highway should be constructed.

I might say to the minister that by extending the trans-Canada highway to Halifax it would involve the construction of some 60 or 70 miles of road from Truro. This road would pass one of the new large international airports now being constructed in Canada, and would have the advantage of providing a fine new road to the largest market in the maritimes. Perhaps it would help to cure our transportation problems.

(Translation):

Mr. Dumas: Mr. Chairman, this is the first time since this government took office that we have an opportunity to take up the estimates of the Department of Public Works.

We know that the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green) is a man of great ability and experience. We had proof of it when he was sitting on this side of the house. I must congratulate him on the work he is doing. We know also that he is a very busy man and that, besides being minister of Public Works, he is the government leader in the house. In fact, rumour has it that he might consider relinquishing the public works portfolio and devote his full time to the proceedings of this house. We hope to have him around for a long time yet.

However, the Minister of Public Works is not the only hard worker in that important department. He is ably seconded by a parliamentary assistant who is also very devoted to his job. I would not like to miss this opportunity to extend my warm congratulations to all the officials in the Department of Public Works, from the senior officials down to the lowliest employee. This department has a large and competent staff, men on whom we can rely at all times. They are sincere civil servants. Therefore, the hon. holder of that portfolio need not worry; we will try to co-operate with them.

This morning the minister attempted to demonstrate that the estimates for his department were a great deal higher at this time than they had been in the past. However, if we take a close look at these figures we will see that this year the extra amount provided is hardly 27 million dollars, even if we take into account the fact that the supplementary estimates for 1957-58 amounted to 16 or 18 million dollars, because this year, in the supplementary estimates, we find an amount of approximately 15 million dollars.

The fact remains that this department is the one which, on a large scale, looks after construction and acquisition of land. In fact, if

we have a look at the table which is provided with the estimates, we see, to begin with, that the Department of National Defence and the Department of Transport are involved to the extent of 107 million dollars in the estimates for the Department of Public Works. That is the highest amount voted for construction and purchase of land. Next comes the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, where the corresponding amount is only 30 million dollars.

I said a moment ago that the Department of National Defence assigns \$100 million to the purchase of land and construction of buildings, that the Department of Transport assigns \$86 million to the same ends, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, \$30 million, which mean that approximately \$216 million are administered by those other departments.

I distinctly remember that in 1951, 1952, 1953 and 1954, when the Minister of Public Works was sitting on this side of the house, he kept on saying that all those acquisitions and building expenditures should have been undertaken by the Department of Public Works. I wonder if the minister has taken steps or prepared a plan to have all construction undertakings come under his department or, at any rate, under the Department of Public Works. The minister probably took steps in that direction and, when he answers the questions raised by the previous speakers, he will probably be in a position to tell us if, in the future, his department should undertake all those construction works for the government.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Caron) raised a rather interesting question having to do with protective works along our navigable waterways. This is an important and fairly complicated problem; the fact remains that those protective works, in the case of navigable rivers and lakes, come under the Department of Public Works. I understand also that, for the government to be responsible, the damage suffered by the riverside owners, along these navigable rivers and lakes, must be caused by navigation, although there is no exact definition about that.

The Harricana river, which runs through my riding and that of Chapeau, is a navigable stream. The officials of the Department of Public Works are well aware of the situation and admit that springtime flooding, due to heavy rains, causes considerable damage to the farmers' properties along the river and on the edges of the lakes forming its basin. The municipal councils of my riding and of the neighbouring one contacted the Department of Public Works, and officials recognized