

Government Orders

This means getting our own house in order, getting our expenditures and deficits under control. Nevertheless, we should not think of Bill C-52 as mere housekeeping. To get Canada back on the prosperity path, to create jobs and well-being we need an innovative economic climate. Government must provide the leadership and the focus to create that environment.

In addition to its housekeeping functions Bill C-52 is part of a strategy to do just that. The strategy was first outlined in *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada*, the so-called red book which continues to inspire the agenda of this government.

That document describes the innovative economy that we all strive to see to completion. It also describes the proper role of government to create the economic condition to permit entrepreneurs to succeed.

Specifically, the red book defines the crucial role of the government in such an innovative system as working with the private sector to identify strategic opportunities for the future, then redirecting its existing resources toward the fulfilment of those opportunities.

The potential impact of the resources we are talking about is nothing short of tremendous. The department created by this bill manages an annual cash flow of \$1.4 trillion. It buys \$10 billion worth of products and services a year. It lets out about 175,000 contracts for approximately 17,000 different categories of goods and services every year.

It is the largest property management agency in Canada, providing work space for 170,000 public servants involving ownership of \$6.5 billion worth of real estate. In the business world that is called clout. It will be one of the roles of the Department of Public Works and Government Services to use that clout effectively. It will be used not only to effect savings for Canadian taxpayers but also to boost Canadian business. An organization that does business on the scale I just described necessarily deals with both big and small buyers and sellers. It deals with provinces, communities and other federal departments. It deals with foreign governments and foreign firms. Its purchasing power permits the public works and government services to strike alliances with Canadian governments and firms to achieve strategic objectives such as penetrating world markets by small Canadian firms that would otherwise never have this accessibility to them individually.

• (1030)

Bill C-52 in fact encourages strategic use of the vast purchasing power of the government. It encourages the department to adopt an innovative approach to providing goods and services to its clients. Equally it encourages a similar attitude on the part of its customers.

The wording of the legislation makes the bill clear. Where previous legislation stated that the department shall provide certain services, Bill C-52 says it may. There is no coercion

here. In essence the bill says to both the department and its clients: "If it is efficient and effective let's make a deal".

Such an arrangement makes for sharp pencils on both sides of the bargain. If the Department of Public Works and Government Services wants to keep its customers it will have to be competitive. Government operations, Canadian businesses and Canadian taxpayers, everyone, will benefit.

Bill C-52 places in one organization all the tools necessary for efficient economical services to the federal government. We have one minister, one deputy minister and one departmental team dedicated to the task. At the same time the bill provides a single forum for expression of the interest of clients as well as suppliers, including businesses and other levels of government.

Flexibility rather than coercion is the spirit of the new department's mandate. Services provided to federal organizations would also be made available to provincial, territorial and local governments but only if they wish to use them.

Similarly the new legislation permits the department to provide service to community colleges, school boards and social service agencies. Federal and provincial governments combined spend some \$50 billion annually on goods and services. A mere 1 per cent savings would add up to half a billion dollars a year. In addition to greater and more effective service to other governments and institutions, this flexibility has the potential to provide significant savings to all Canadians.

Yet a remarkable aspect of the legislation is the simplicity. It is based largely on existing legislation. No great new powers have been invented. In sum, it reduces the government machinery, eliminating overlap and duplication. It provides one-stop shopping for suppliers and contractors, making it easier to do business and easier to get information. It permits the Department of Public Works and Government Services to use its purchasing power strategically, not only to reduce costs to taxpayers but to enhance the effectiveness and competitiveness of all Canadian business.

The legislation is good for business in Canada. It is an instrument of responsive efficient government that will assist in creating the economic environment that all Canadian businesses need to get on with the task of creating jobs and economic well-being.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-52, which is at second reading today, is primarily an attempt to group four different services under the same authority.

• (1035)

These services either existed as distinct entities before, such as public works and government services which were formerly two separate departments, or were part of another department, as was the case for telecommunications and translation services. In any case, under the new legislation those four services will