

Government Orders

Purchasers called it a leverage buy-out, but it was an asset strip. It was a perfect candidate. Maybe it occurred just because we in government have not learned how to sell things yet. Maybe we really did not yet learn how to do it right. Maybe there is still a learning curve. I and my caucus want to make sure that if we are going to do this kind of thing again, because we have good policy reasons to do it, we do it right. I do not want to make any more mistakes, and I do not want to prejudice any more government employees. I do not want to prejudice any more employees of the Crown corporation. I want to make sure we do the right thing, and do it the right way. Why am I cautious? The mention of a few of those corporations ought to permit us to deduce why. Let us take a closer look at the two corporations at which I want to look more closely.

First, there is Canada Place in Vancouver. I note that it has a depreciated asset book value of \$67 million, not an insignificant sum. Also, I want to point out that the land on which that building sits, which is valued at \$67 million depreciated dollars, was purchased for \$1 in the Vancouver market. I want to put a flag beside that.

I want to say to the government that it is dealing with an asset value that may approach \$100 million, that when it is disposed of there has to be the policy analysis that first dictates the privatization. Then there must be a careful procedure to ensure that it is sold properly, without embarrassment and that the taxpayers have recovered what is justly theirs.

The second area is Harbourfront Corporation which has a book value of \$30 million. I have to suspect that the book value on these lands, property rights and leases, all of which were acquired over a decade ago, is vastly understated in the Toronto real estate market.

I think we will be looking for a better appraisal and a better statement of just what these assets were, notwithstanding that the minister indicates that it is the government's intention to move these assets into another public corporation, joint or otherwise, involving the provincial and municipal governments in Toronto.

It is also essential that we see the privatization analysis. I am confident we will have an opportunity to ask for this in committee. I am quite sure we will see it. We are not going to sell these assets involving all of

these millions of dollars on such terms as the Governor in Council shall approve unless we see that analysis, not just because it was in the budget.

I am saying all of this for the minister's benefit. I know when he retires in 1993 that he will want to retire proudly, feeling that he has done a great job for the taxpayers and the people of Canada. I want him to be proud of his work. I do not want to see him harassed and hounded out of office by a crowd of journalists and angry opposition MPs. I know he will take our advice. I know he really believes I said all of that for his benefit.

As well, I want to point out in connection with the Vancouver sale the controversy which has surrounded current and recent past sales of the Vancouver Expo lands. There is a mandatory requirement of intensive government consultation with the local governments.

I have a special interest in the Harbourfront in metro Toronto lands, my riding being Scarborough—Rouge River in metropolitan Toronto. I want to ask if the privatization contemplated here is consistent with what is known as the Crombie royal commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront. I know that the minister believes that it is, and I have seen it written in some locations that it is, but I am not a believer yet.

Is this a sale, the terms of which are before us? No, we do not see the terms of the sale. The statute does not even say to whom it will be sold or transferred. We do not know that yet.

• (1040)

We are passing a law that says: "Governor in Council, cabinet, sell this asset and get what you can". The minister says no that is not quite what it is, but that is what the law says and that is why we are here: to pass a law. I am looking at the words in the statute. This privatization is supposed to be consistent with the Crombie recommendation.

I would like to read two recommendations of the Crombie royal commission. The first one says: "We recommend first that there be no further sale of lands currently held in public ownership including provincial and federal". The second one I want to read is: "We recommend that aggressive public land acquisition programs be instituted on the waterfront".