

Air Transport

round road, rail or marine services. Just over one-half the population lives in small urban centres, such as Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Frobisher Bay, while the other half lives in isolated settlements in the rural outreaches of the North.

My riding of Nunatsiak is characterized by these small rural communities. There are 33 communities ranging in size from 35 to 2,700 people which make up the riding of Nunatsiak. Of the 17,000 who inhabit my riding, over 85 per cent are of native descent, the majority Inuit.

Large distances exist between communities in my riding and in other regions across the North. With little, if any, road access, and infrequent marine services limited to the brief summer months, air services have assumed vital roles in northern development. There is a heavy reliance across the North on air transportation services for the movement of goods, foodstuffs, materials and people. As the transporter of necessary supplies, the air industry has assumed an essential role throughout the Northwest Territories.

Political, social, economic and cultural development are all perilously dependent upon the fragile transportation network of the North. However, problems abound when a fragile transportation system is linked to such community development, and the price northerners pay for this dependence is high. Personal travel costs are often prohibitive. The cost to import goods from other parts of Canada is also very high.

Air fares are costly and unaffordable to most northerners. Goods and foodstuffs reflect inflated prices, with the cost of transportation a prime factor. For example, a 10-pound bag of potatoes sells for about \$15 in the northern community of Pond Inlet, while the same bag of potatoes can be bought for just over \$3 at an Ottawa grocery store. Among other factors, the price difference is attributed to the cost of transporting the food product to the North.

Most northern communities face similar high costs on all food items. Northern food costs are usually more than double the price paid for similar items in the south. Yet, most northern residents earn incomes well below those of our southern neighbours. The personal freedom to travel throughout the North and to other parts of Canada is considered to be a luxury limited to business and government and employer-subsidized travellers. Air travel in the North is costly and air fares are as much as 15 per cent to 40 per cent higher than air fares in the south for similar distances. For example, the one-way economy fare between Regina and Winnipeg, a distance of 331 miles, is \$121. By comparison, the fare between Rankin Inlet and Repulse Bay in the North at a similar distance is \$233. A ticket from Resolute Bay to Frobisher Bay, a distance of 1,000 miles, costs \$355, while a fare between Montreal and Winnipeg is only \$254.

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To fly from Cambridge Bay to Pelly Bay, a distance of 388 miles, costs about \$486, but a flight from Calgary to Vancouver at a slightly greater distance is only \$139. I could go on comparing fares but inequalities are too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say that intra-regional and North-South air travel

is costly and the further North one travels, the more obvious the discrepancies become.

Freight rates are slightly more equitable, but they still prohibit importation of a large amount of goods without a substantial cash outlay. Most communities in the North, therefore, rely on the annual re-supply by ship and barge to import large quantities of dry goods at more equitable prices. This activity generally occurs during the brief summer months following the break-up of the ice. Most communities receive only one re-supply annually. As well, inadequate docking, port and unloading facilities exist in many northern communities, and spoilage and loss of goods due to damage is often high.

Sea lift is also considered to be a less efficient mode of transporting goods to the North. Not only are the risks greater but the time required to prepare for marine re-supply is lengthy. It generally takes eight to twelve weeks to prepare sea lift orders and an additional eight to twelve weeks before the orders are delivered to the communities. The requirement that all orders must be prepaid also limits any benefits to Government, private businesses, co-operatives and individuals.

Generally the transportation of goods across the Territories comes through three corridors. The western Arctic is served by air, road and barge out of Edmonton. The central Arctic is served through Winnipeg by rail, ship and air, and the eastern Arctic through Montreal by ship and air only.

For eastern Arctic residents, the reliance on air transportation is most apparent. If one lives in Grise Fiord, Canada's most northerly community, for example, all of one's food, goods, construction materials and supplies come through or from Montreal. At a distance of over 3,500 kilometres, it would be similar to living in Montreal and having all of one's essential supplies coming from Paris without benefit of jet service for most of the route. Just imagine the logistics, costs and inconveniences such a venture would generate. Add inclement and unpredictable weather conditions and you will have some idea of the harsh realities facing many northerners, Mr. Speaker.

The high cost of transporting goods and the high cost of personal travel to and within the North is prohibitive to many northerners. This becomes especially significant when we stop to assess the economic profiles of northern communities and particularly those in the Riding of Nunatsiak. High unemployment and low-wage economies across the North are among the many factors that inhibit the use of air transportation services. Extra cash on hand for air travel simply is not available to many northerners and particularly to low-income earners.

The Territories have one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada and were at 17 per cent in December 1984. In my riding, this percentage fluctuates from a low of 5 per cent in one community to a high of 41 per cent in another. As well, the smaller, more isolated communities of the North, characteristic of my riding, usually lack a modern economic base and have low monetary incomes.

As well as high unemployment, residents in the North face some of the highest costs of living in Canada. For example,