

Government Orders

accountant I referred to, that in fact the department was getting a handle on how to deal with this community-by-community approach. That shows clearly in my mind the commitment I have to developing this community-by-community approach, and that in fact it can work. I think that is a more logical and more consistent way to administer a program like this as opposed to the very arbitrary line of latitude that the government has in the end adopted.

In fact, I am doing my homework and work on this and have asked for a report to be written on developing a proper community-by-community approach that can be dealt with under this program so that communities such as Valemount, Vanderhoof, Fort St. James, Houston and other communities can in fact fit into this system. I think there is a good reason for that, and the good reason is this: If it is the government's goal, federal or provincial, to provide a degree of services to all of its citizens that we have come to expect—and in many cases I think we should demand—then how is it that we discipline ourselves and our own governments to see that that is in fact done? I think there is reason to develop a grading system, depending on the remoteness of a community. If it does not have a lot of the services, then develop a scale. If the government takes the initiative and ends up providing that school or that hospital or that medicare or an entrepreneur or a bank comes in and provides another service, fair enough, drop down the scale. Then we have a way to measure the quality of services that I think all of us deserve whether we live in Vancouver, Regina, Vanderhoof, Penny, Burns Lake or Fraser Lake. That is the kind of system I see being developed here. Unfortunately this government in this legislation is taking a step backward in providing that. Eventually I think we will see basically the complete elimination of this program. That would be bad news obviously for many of the residents of northern Canada.

It is going to take some additional work for those communities that have been successful in the boundaries provided by the government. We also have a new opponent on this, the Reform Party, which is now opposed completely to any kind of northern tax allowance. I think that will come as quite a surprise to many of the former Conservatives mostly who are taking a look at the Reform Party. I think they will be quite surprised by

this backward step, which of course we have come to expect from the Reform Party, that is being taken by that party. It is my view, of course, that in the rush to really be Conservatives in drag, if you like, or their concern that the Conservative Party, and even this party, has not been right wing enough in its application of its economic policies, they are trying to outdo even the Conservative Party, and in some cases obviously they have been doing very well. So, the Reform Party and the Conservative Party are united on this. It is another opponent that people who live in northern and remote communities will have in order to try and guarantee the kind of services that we need and I think deserve to have in this country.

It is an important part of a very substantial piece of legislation that I think residents of northern communities should be aware of. I will certainly be informing my constituents in those areas about this legislation, about the changes that are being brought in. I am certainly open if members opposite or in the House are interested in seeing some alternative proposals that my research eventually comes up with. I would of course be pleased to pass it on to them because I think all members of this House who represent rural and northern communities know how important that program is. We have got to fight to keep what little we have left now and we have got to do more work where possible to expand that to include those communities that do need it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will now leave the chair until 2 p.m.

The House took recess at 1:47 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed 2 p.m.