

what happened in many instances was that it was impossible to get equipment into the communities to bring the airstrips up to a standard that was created all of a sudden. In certain instances the location of the terminal building was not according to the regulations. This had a very bad effect on communities such as Oxford House, which an airplane could overfly on its way to another remote area but where it could not land because it did not have a class II or class III licence. So the people in the community had no air transportation facilities out of there unless they chartered an aircraft; and if they did that, it did not matter what aircraft they used because the Department of Transport did not require the regulations to be adhered to by a charter. However, there was a different situation if you were going in on a scheduled run.

● (2152)

This put the community in the position where it was costing more to bring goods in. It was costing more for transportation, and that hindered development. In the case of Oxford House, exactly one year later the terminal building sat exactly where it was in 1975. No further improvements have been made to that particular airstrip. The strip is some 4,200 feet long with a 300-foot wide landing surface which is gravel. However, no major changes to the design of that airstrip took place. This is one which had been closed. Lo and behold, in 1976 permission was granted to re-licence that airstrip for a class III carrier. For one year this community's development was hindered, and then all of a sudden there was a reversal.

When the hon. member for Hastings (Mr. Ellis) was talking about ELTs, I was reminded of the confusion northern carriers face. As I said before, without aircraft in the north there is no means of transportation and communication. It seems that the larger the aircraft we get into these communities, the cheaper it will be.

In many locations and in many circumstances operators in the north are totally confused as to what the Ministry of Transport is doing with regard to the aviation business. I hear stories of air carriers still holding class II licences in communities where there have been no aircraft for the last six or seven years. That hinders the development of many other carriers in the area because communities are protected by licence but those licenses have not been used for the last five to six years. We can see this happening throughout the north. I receive repeated complaints from operators in the north. They are really confused about the directions which come from the Ministry of Transport. There are many good men in the Ministry of Transport, and I think they give good suggestions to the government, but the government is not sensitive enough to react to some of those suggestions. The government is hindering the aviation business and confusing those who are trying to get into it.

Just recently a chap from a very remote community applied for class IV licence so that he could serve that community, but the CTC turned the application down because it was felt that the community was already sufficiently served. That was the only aircraft based in that community, and the reason for

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having it there was to serve the community in case of emergency.

Back in 1976 it was decided to impose a \$2.60 landing fee on private aircraft landing at airstrips. This caused concern among private pilots. It is necessary for many people in the north to have small aircraft in order to go to larger centres because they have no other means of communication. Because of pressure from this side of the House the government withdrew that part of its order in council and the fee remained at \$1. However, it was only through pressure brought by various pilots' associations, private air carriers and others that there was a turnaround.

I would like to speak briefly about the amendment. As I understand it, Bill C-4 proposes to give the minister a more arbitrary power to collect money from users of airports. The user-pay concept is really what I see coming out of it. We see this concept being used by the Department of Transport not only with regard to air carriers but also with regard to ground transportation. The policy has been applied to the CNR as well.

In 1974 at Thompson, Manitoba it was recognized that an expansion of the airstrip would be necessary to accommodate the traffic that airport had. It was the eleventh busiest airport in Canada that year. It was a jumping off point not only for Manitoba but also for the Northwest Territories because of its location and because of its being served by rail and by road. Much effort was put into attempts to get an expansion of the airstrip, an expansion of the ramp area and an expansion of the cross strip.

Originally that airport was laid out by the Department of Transport. The site was selected by that department. I do not know who was responsible for the forward planning of that airstrip, but when it came time to expand the ramp area and to put in a cross strip it was found that there was permafrost in the general area. After soil samples were taken as a result of drilling it was found that there were many ice lenses and silt pockets to the east and to the west of the existing ramp. This caused the department to have to excavate thousands of yards of material, to dig the permafrost out and then to fill the excavation in with gravel. With the vast amounts of land we have in northern Manitoba one would have thought that perhaps in the planning of the airstrip in the first place a location which did not have a permafrost problem would be chosen. A group of engineers from the department chose the site, and in the wisdom of the department the present site was chosen. However, if a different site had been chosen thousands of dollars spent on excavation could have been saved.

Fortunately, we now have a ramp area, but it is still not sufficiently large due to the terrain. Many of the facilities have had to be put on the far side of the airstrip, and another road to that location has had to be built. All across the north many locations are still not served by good facilities when an emergency is imminent. In this regard I say that taking the ELTs out of aircraft in October was a serious mistake. I see now that we have them back in. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call it ten o'clock.