

thickness of the ice, the current of a river, the state of the road, and the temperature. Communications for the north is not a luxury. It is essentially a necessity for survival.

In the coming years Canadians are going to witness many changes in one of our greatest national institutions, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Since 1984 the government has consistently slashed CBC funding and Michael Wilson's recent federal budget announced a further \$140 million in funding cuts over the next five years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would just like to bring to the member's attention that it is the Minister of Finance. Please do not name the person.

Ms. Blondin: I would like to express the importance that people put on the whole element of communication as it relates to air safety. There was a program termed the CBC weather program. There was supposed to be an allocation of approximately \$400,000 to that program. That program was cut. That funding was denied. The air industry in that particular area of the north in which I reside in Western Arctic was very upset about it. The majority of my constituents depend on air travel. They do not have the luxury of buses, trains or highways. If there are highways in some of the area that I represent, they are winter roads; they are seasonal.

The importance of communications for the purpose of air safety is paramount. I must say that communication is the issue surrounding the problem with service at the Fort Franklin airport, an issue that has become prominent of late. A plane crash in 1984 killed seven people in that community. It was CBC that carried this tragic news and told the north that had there been the proper weather and communications services this would not have occurred. It would have helped to avoid this very serious and tragic accident. The Canadian Aviation Safety Board reported the accident may have been prevented if there had been proper weather and communication services.

The minister of state yesterday stated in this House that his information indicates Fort Franklin does not need communication and weather service. So they cancelled the contract yesterday. For the sake of \$35,000 this government is willing to jeopardize the lives of northerners who totally depend on air travel. Air travel is not to

be separated from communications. We needed that service. We needed that \$400,000. We needed the money.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With great respect to the hon. member who I know and admire, I would like to have the hon. member get to the point of these amendments.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Edwards: The issue that she is dealing with is very significant, having to do with air traffic and safety in the north. If it is related to these amendments, fine, but I have not heard the connection yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am sure the hon. member will get to the connection. The hon. member for Western Arctic.

Ms. Blondin: Mr. Speaker, CBC has a weather channel and weather is very important. CBC in the south may be for entertainment purposes, maybe for enlightenment. In the north CBC services are a matter of necessity.

Mrs. Finestone: That's right.

Ms. Blondin: They provide information for the purpose of survival for people in the north.

Mrs. Finestone: Absolutely.

Ms. Blondin: I am sure that is something the hon. member opposite will appreciate, if he is willing to listen to what I have to say or to what the people I represent have to say.

This is what they have to say. Lois Hill, pilot/base manager from Norman Wells said:

On-location weather reporting is extremely valuable to our company's operations—Many of our chartered flights take us to the Fort Franklin area. The large body of water/ice which makes up Great Bear Lake causes anomalies in local weather patterns which are difficult to predict.

Ed Phillips from Air Sahtu in Fort Franklin referred to the real irony of the letter from Transport. I know that the whole issue of communications is inextricably intertwined, that we cannot separate the two. The people were very aggrieved when the \$400,000 was not reallocated for the weather service that CBC offered. I have a list of the names of the helicopter and airplane pilots who were very upset. The real irony was that the letter arrived on October 9, 1990. He continued: