

Government Orders

system. You might see some sections of roadway linking together a few villages along the coast, but nothing connecting these villages to the Quebec system.

I will divide my speech in two. I will start with the communities accessible by road and then deal with the communities which are not accessible by road. In a riding like Manicouagan, where regional economic development is concerned, air transportation is very important, because it usually facilitates the first contacts between an investor and the territory he or she wishes to develop. Once they have flown to the targeted area, investors look at the various facilities they and their employees could benefit from. Of course, air services are a big consideration when advantages and disadvantages are reviewed.

That is why this issue cannot be treated lightly. For the people in my riding of Manicouagan, flying is not a luxury, it is a crucial service not only to ensure regional and economic development, but to maintain the quality of life they are entitled to as taxpayers. More than 85 per cent of small and medium sized communities are located within 150 kilometres of a major urban area.

A major urban centre is a built-up area where you can find all the important health and government services. In Quebec, we are talking about Montreal, Quebec City, Chicoutimi, Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke. So, in those areas where there is significant population density, they are not usually lacking for much of anything to meet the basic needs to achieve a decent standard of living in 1994.

• (1600)

But what is the decent standard of living that the Manicouagan taxpayers have a right to expect in 1994? The bill talks about equity in relation to cost distribution. So, for analysis purposes, I did some brief calculations where equity must represent the same rate, must mean that we should pay the same price for an air kilometre, no matter where.

That gives us some really interesting data. For example, between Quebec City and Montreal, which is undoubtedly the busiest corridor, some percentage of variation could be acceptable. We could agree with that, but to go from simple to double, as I will show you, is an aberration. It is not only an exaggeration, but an aberration. For Quebec City—Montreal, we arrive at more or less \$1.10 per air kilometre; for Sept-Îles—Natashquan—as people cannot get to that area by road, they must take a plane for emergencies or whatever—\$1.34 per kilometre; for Sept-Îles—Blanc-Sablon, \$1.82. We should not forget that the rate for Montreal—Quebec City is still \$1.10. The equity must be somewhere. We will talk about Natashquan—Montreal, which is \$2.29 per kilometre; that is more than double the rate. Another

one which is more than double: Saint-Augustin—Montreal, \$2.32; for Blanc-Sablon—Montreal, \$2.40. This is an aberration. But, according to the minister, there is equity somewhere in there. It does not make any sense.

Those people who are not linked to a road system, those living in communities that are not located within the road network of Quebec, have the same basic needs as those I mentioned earlier, but of course they also have particularities.

Let us take for instance health clinics. Suppose we have an emergency where a child is involved, or any other person, and needs special care. Since these clinics cannot provide the treatments, a sanitary plane of the Government of Quebec will be used to take the patient to a centre, Quebec or Montreal, as required. However, people who accompany the patients have to disburse considerable amounts of money to go with them.

Let us take Blanc-Sablon, for instance. A mother who is morally obligated to accompany her child to a Quebec hospital will have to pay almost \$1,500 in transport, whereas if she resided in Baie-Saint-Paul, she would not have to bear such costs since that community is linked to the road system.

Air transport is not a luxury in the riding of Manicouagan.

That fact is mentioned in a resolution of the city council of Natashquan which I have here. The city council naturally sent a letter to the provincial minister and I would like to quote a few lines of that resolution which refer to the various preambles dealing with the specificity of those regions.

“Given the geographic difficulties”, and this is not trivial, because the North Shore is not flat and you do not play golf every day in that area. “Given the health and education problems linked to transportation”, teachers, doctors, people travelling to every corner of the North Shore go by plane because they have no other choice. Air travel is so outrageously expensive that the city council mentions it in its resolution. Although every city council could say the same thing but I mentioned only that of Natashquan.

They also explain how this affects supplies. I would like to tell you a short story dealing with food commodities. Here, a T-bone steak is expensive, and a tomato is certainly a lot cheaper, but if you go to Natashquan or Chevery, like I did in February, a tomato costs almost more than a T-bone because to buy a tomato in February, it has to be shipped there practically by November, so imagine what it will cost in February if it is still good to eat. This is of course an extreme example, but we have to consider these regional differences. Air transportation is a major factor here. And that is part of the reason why we are rising in the House today.