

Government Orders

The act is simply a system of registration and does not grant any powers to administer lands. Land titles are a provincial responsibility in the rest of Canada. The administrative responsibilities of the land titles offices in both Yellowknife and Whitehorse were assumed by the territorial governments back in 1967 and 1975 respectively.

• (1545)

I simply want to say we will support the passage of Bill C-103 at second reading because we certainly agree enthusiastically with the principle of this bill. However, I do feel it would be inappropriate if I did not mention a serious concern we have. Hopefully, we can have this clarified before this goes to committee.

In our discussions with the principals involved, we believe not enough attention was paid during the consultation process. I think my hon. friend referred to this in his comments as well. The department claims that consultations were conducted and various groups chose not to respond. It nevertheless feels the matter has been satisfied to its purposes while I think my view would be quite different.

What prompted that view was the receipt of a copy of a letter from the Yellowknife Dene band which pointed out it was informed through a news release of this very important gesture. Now whether that is true or not, and I understand there is some question whether it is, I think the important thing is that there are groups of people in the north who have not been adequately apprised of this. Perhaps there were opportunities in the past. I understand many years ago when this was first noted they had a chance to respond. But the reality of this world is that a simple letter going out three or four years ago may not have elicited the appropriate response for something we are dealing with today.

We all recognize that some further consultation and discussion is now required. I urge the government to do this prior to any serious deliberations in committee so we can have adequate input from all stakeholders in this particular decision.

I think that indicates our intent to support this bill at second reading. Again, any initiative that would empower northerners to take control their future through decision-making is appropriate and should be encouraged. But we do have this particular concern in terms of the major stakeholders at this point not being adequately consulted. They should be consulted either before or certainly during the committee process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I put the question, I believe the hon. member for St. John's East said the bill would be referred to a legislative committee in the Human Resources envelope.

Could I call upon the hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, anything to help you along here.

I suggested that I thought you might find consent in the House to refer it to a legislative committee in the Human Resources envelope instead of referring it to a legislative committee based on the department. That consent has been sought and I think received. That was merely the intent of my comments.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say there have been adequate consultations in this case, the suggestion is an excellent one and we will certainly support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Agreed and so ordered. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Human Resources envelope.