

*Government Orders*

referred to by other members in the House today as a large piece—some 400 pages—of legislation.

I am particularly interested in just putting some comments on the record as they relate to questions around the northern tax allowance which is referred to in this bill. Essentially sections of this bill are implementing measures introduced by the government on the northern tax allowance in response primarily to a great deal of public debate throughout northern Canada and northern British Columbia in my area. This is basically in response to a report prepared for the then Minister of Finance in October 1989. There was a resulting announcement by the government in February of this year in regard to amendments to the legislation on northern benefits.

The end result of all of that is in Bill C-18 which we are debating today. Other members have talked about different aspects of the legislation. My colleague who is the member for Beaches—Woodbine spoke about the disabled. As I mentioned, I would like to enter some comments on the record about the northern tax allowance and what this bill is doing. It is such an important program as it relates to taxation for those people who reside in the northern parts of British Columbia and northern Canada.

Why is such a program so important? First, one must get a sense of how many of us live in northern and remote areas such as in my home town of Prince George and in my riding. Parts of it are remote and isolated. Of course there are many other communities in the country that are a great deal more northern and remote.

Generally speaking, what kind of services do we not have that people in large urban centres have come to take for granted? Some communities in my riding such as Grand Isle have a real problem getting adequate medical service provided. A community like Valemount has to advertise in international publications to try and get doctors to locate in that community to provide health care. Could you imagine people in a community like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver or Regina not being able to have adequate medical care? Could you imagine simple things like banking services that do not exist in a number of those areas?

Education, for example. We are very pleased in northern B.C. now that we will be getting the University of

Northern British Columbia, but sometimes it makes you feel that when you live in some of the remote areas that you have to crawl across crushed glass to convince governments of your needs. It is not that we are asking for a lot. In fact, in many cases I think the people in many northern communities are likely more patient than they really should be with their governments, regardless of which party is in office.

I think we have a great deal to do both from a federal perspective and obviously from a provincial perspective to provide that kind of balance and that level playing field, if you like, for people who live in these communities.

In British Columbia, if you can sell a case a beer for the same price in Vancouver as you can sell it elsewhere in the province then I think governments have an obligation to take a look at providing the kind of services that are needed throughout northern communities.

What we are doing through this bill that is being presented today for us is implementing a number of the follow-ups, as I mentioned, from the government in terms of administering the northern tax allowance. I want to focus on what I think is one particularly important approach to take on this tax, an approach unfortunately not taken by this report and certainly not being followed by the government.

In looking at the report which was conducted with a number of hearings in communities just prior, if I am not mistaken, to the last federal election, the government knew it was in some trouble on this issue. It was an attempt to try and really assuage a great deal of discontent in many northern ridings over this issue and so off we go with a study to take a look at the issue.

The study into the Northern Tax Allowance Program heard from Canadians and people throughout northern communities and talked about how you implement a northern tax allowance. They provided some interesting information as to why you need a northern tax allowance to provide that fairness in the tax system that we are always talking about.

For people who have a copy of the report, I refer them to page 12 where it basically gives a scenario of a community in the north and a community in the south, taking into account that often wages are higher in