

*Government Orders*

Another objective of Bill C-104 is to release the province of Saskatchewan from its obligation, the one I spoke of earlier, to provide unoccupied provincial Crown land to the federal government for the creation of reserves. As I said this is a constitutional obligation contained within the natural resources transfer agreement of 1930. As a consequential element of this legislation there will be an amendment to the natural resources transfer agreement.

• (1110)

Bill C-104 will also establish a legislative basis for the co-management agreements that are contemplated between entitlement bands in the province of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. Saskatchewan wanted to ensure that its ability to manage bodies of water, rivers, reservoirs, et cetera, and its authority to manage those waters would not be fettered by way of those waters coming within the boundaries of entitlement lands that would be added to reserve holdings.

Entitlement bands by way of this agreement will also be able to enter into binding agreements with urban and northern municipalities and school divisions on the provision of services. This too is provided for within Bill C-104.

A legislated provision is also required to ensure that moneys paid under the treaty land entitlement agreements are not to be defined as Indian moneys under the terms of the Indian Act because there are very stringent conditions associated with aboriginal communities having access to those funds for their own purposes. The legislative provision with respect to moneys provides a special account to be established to collect the moneys, the proceeds from the settlement under this agreement, and the earnings of those proceeds. This special account will enable the collecting of interest on moneys paid into the treaty land entitlement Saskatchewan fund, to be administered for the benefit of the entitlement bands and in joint consultation with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Finally, the framework agreement acknowledges there may be other Saskatchewan bands without standing treaty land entitlements. Bill C-104 includes a provision

to accommodate these bands, any which may have additional land entitlement accepted and validated, under the provisions of this framework agreement, under the same terms and conditions that applied to the original 27 entitlement bands.

I indicated at the beginning of my remarks that Bill C-104 was an extremely technical piece of legislation. Hon. members can now appreciate what I meant in saying that. I hope I have not confused the House unduly. In endeavouring to understand the legal mechanisms this mechanism will put in place, I urge members not to lose sight of its primary objective which is to continue to address past commitments to the aboriginal people of Canada and to honour them.

Bill C-104 is concrete evidence that this government is committed to living up to its historical and contemporary obligations to First Nations. It is a major step forward in achieving our native agenda commitment to resolving treaty land entitlements.

Hon. members should know that work is also under way on resolving related treaty land entitlements in the provinces of Alberta and Manitoba. We have already settled some five TLE shortfalls in the province of Alberta and we are negotiating another five at the present time. We are commencing negotiations with entitlement bands in the province of Manitoba as well. I am sure that the speedy conclusion of the agreements in the adjacent prairie provinces will be facilitated by the work already done and by the principles set out in this framework agreement with the entitlement bands of Saskatchewan.

For the 27 entitlement bands in Saskatchewan the framework, Nekaneet agreements and this supporting legislation will end decades of uncertainty and enable them to recover what has always been theirs. It will dramatically improve their prospects for self-sufficiency by expanding their reserve land base and providing new opportunities for economic development.

The Government of Saskatchewan will also benefit, as will all the people of Saskatchewan. The treaty land entitlement agreements will end decades of acrimony, create certainty about future land use and provide a significant financial injection into the provincial economy on the scale of a half billion dollars.