

*Government Orders*

with federal safety and security standards. The local airport authority must ensure the provision of crash, fire, and rescue services to Transport Canada services.

The bill before us today would legislate the requirements of the local airport authority regarding the Official Languages Act and labour relations. It is imperative that we establish, when a local airport authority takes over the operation of an airport, that Transport Canada remains responsible in all aspects for all air side operations and for the safety of that airport. On this there can be no equivocation. The safety aspects on the air side of transportation must remain in the hands of the federal government. Air traffic controllers, the climatic people, and the environmental people must all be under its control.

Local authority assumes, in full, the responsibility of the terminal or ground side facility only. The local airport authority should be afforded the flexibility to operate that facility in the manner in which it determines is most conducive to meeting the three main objectives of the group, that is: what changes can be implemented to better the service to the community; what can be implemented to attract more customers to the community; and what is needed to meet the needs of the region while operating on a more effective cost basis.

In its present form, this bill will restrict local airport authorities from acting in the communities' best interest. This is the qualification to which I spoke to earlier.

It is essential that the current employees at an airport which is to be transferred to a local authority must receive fair and equitable treatment, that all statutory obligations are met and that the present union agreements are adhered to.

All current employees must be given job security. Of that there is no question.

However, Mr. Speaker, it would be a serious setback for local authorities if they were not permitted to subsequently hire employees who are in the local community and who are deemed to provide better or more appropriate services based on cost-effectiveness.

To hire more employees who are more attuned and more reflective of the community needs. That is, once all obligations are met, the local group should have the freedom of employing the services of whatever

individual or whatever company they will establish, in keeping with the norms established in that community.

There should be no obligation that employees of the airport be part of the federal Public Service and that the local airport authority be bound in any acts of the Public Service. Without this provision, we are in effect hamstringing the local groups from meeting the objectives that we had set earlier.

What we are doing with the act as it is presently set is a facade; the granting of authority to local groups without granting the responsibility for its operation. What we are creating in this present legislation, as I see it, is a local airport advisory group and I can assure you that the group that I meet with in Thunder Bay is not interested in becoming an advisory group unless it has some degree of control over the operation and the community interests; that it can respond to the community interest. I do not think they are interested in being an advisory group, and I am sure that there will be many groups in this country that would not want those restrictions placed on their role.

The current employees must receive—and let me emphasize that again—fair, equitable treatment in any local airport authority, but eventually the local airport authority should be given the freedom to make its own rules, set the criteria by which they consider that airport is going to operate in the future.

I see my time is running short. Let me emphasize, Mr. Speaker, by again repeating critical points: One, it is our understanding of this legislation that there will not be any direct costs to any municipality or provincial government that says that it does not want a local airport authority in place. The municipalities will be held free and blameless and will not be looked upon to contribute toward the courts' cost of administering what the airport will do.

The end result will be that the airport authority will eventually be responsible to the Ministry of Transport. More important, the Minister of Transport and his department will still be responsible for safety on the air side.

Let me close by saying that it can be nothing but responsive to the needs of our communities throughout this country. I made reference to Thunder Bay, but I am sure it is all communities in this country which can take