

We want not just to develop another fishing lodge, or another golf course. We want to have a comprehensive approach to this and, of course, we have announced it.

FEDNOR, which was established in 1987, has been an immense success. I see its reputation for effectiveness is growing. We have recent public opinion surveys that indicate a large number of people in northern Ontario know about FEDNOR now. We want to see it grow from strength to strength.

No other province has a special federal program designed for the northern tier of the province. We have that for northern Ontario. Northern Ontario has that economic board, FEDNOR. It is doing a tremendous job. That is an indication of the importance in which the federal government holds northern Ontario in the life of our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): There is a five-minute question and comment period.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear from the minister this afternoon and to know of the plans with regard to FEDNOR. I just have a couple of questions. I know that we have a limited amount of time. I concur with his desire to assist in the difficulties that communities such as Elliot Lake face in providing special assistance with regard to incentive grants for small business. I wonder if he could clarify a couple of points in that regard.

In communities like Elliot Lake we are not talking about 200 or 300 jobs being lost or trying to create a couple of hundred jobs. We are actually talking about over 2,000 jobs in a community with a workforce of 3,600. Will the FEDNOR board and the chairman, Leo Bernier, be empowered not only to expedite grants under the FEDNOR small business incentive, or the other programs that are now there, but also to have a co-ordinating role with regard to major federal-provincial agreements? Ministers from the province of Ontario such as René Fontaine are saying to us: "You know, we are facing the loss of 2,000 jobs here in the next 12 months, what are the feds going to do?" That is what I have been trying to determine. For instance, I have suggested that we have not only a special allocation under the community initiatives fund of the Community

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Futures Program but, as well, if there are major economic developments that we can suggest, will the federal government and will the FEDNOR board act as the co-ordinating agency to put together larger projects? We have a very capable board and chairman there.

I appreciate the comments the minister has made with regard to incentive grants, but I think it is hard for most people to imagine that a program like FEDNOR which has to deal with an area that represents 88 per cent of the land mass of northern Ontario, has created only 2,000 jobs. We are appreciative of those but we are talking about the loss in Elliot Lake of 2,000 jobs in one community. I wonder if the minister could clarify that. That would be really useful.

The other matter that I wonder if he could clarify relates to page 12 of the budget where it states:

We are taking a more businesslike approach to assistance to business. With limited exceptions, grants will be eliminated and financial assistance will be repayable on more rigorous terms.

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding concerning this. Most of us believe that the grants are being eliminated by FEDNOR. Will grants still be available?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): If the hon. member wishes some answers to those questions, he may want to leave time for the hon. minister.

Mr. Hockin: Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to respond to my friend's questions. The first thing I should do is reiterate what I said before. FEDNOR itself cannot through countless grants to small enterprises ever absorb the 2,000 jobs directly, and he knows that.

What we could do is play a co-ordinating role, and I like his suggestion. That is one reason why we are sending this subcommittee of the FEDNOR board there next week. It is to take a look at what we may be able to do in terms of giving leadership comprehensively.

The federal government in the past, and you saw this in Sudbury just a few weeks ago, has taken a major initiative to build a world class science facility, the Neutrino Observatory in Sudbury. We have been able to take these lunges of leadership right into the heart of new opportunities internationally and put them in northern Ontario.