

Government Orders

consensus and the depth of desire not only for passage but speedy passage of both bills.

They recognize the importance of resolving the question of land claims and self-government to the future development of the territory.

They recognize the potential benefit of those agreements to the future well-being of the Yukon First Nation who make up one quarter of the territory's people.

They recognize that the certainty embodied in these pieces of legislation can only encourage more investment and development in Yukon to the benefit of all its citizens.

Yukon needs economic growth if it is to provide hope and meaningful employment for its young and growing population. More than half of Yukon's aboriginal population is under 24 years of age.

In recent years there has been a marked improvement in the education and training opportunities available to First Nations. All of this means little unless there are jobs to be had in a growing economy. Yukon needs investment and it needs resource development, industrial diversification, strengthened infrastructure and service industry enhancement.

I am convinced that this self-government agreement, together with the land claim settlement, will give a very real stimulus to the investment and growth that Yukon needs and for the creation of jobs.

The government has made it clear that improving the quality of life of Canada's aboriginal people is a major concern and priority. The document *Creating Opportunity* expressed it this way:

The priority of a Liberal government will be to assist aboriginal communities in their efforts to address the obstacles to their development and help them marshal the human and physical resources necessary to build and sustain vibrant communities.

This legislation will provide new hope and opportunity for Yukon's First Nations and will go to the very heart of that commitment. The bill is clearly deserving of our support.

On a more personal note and in closing, it is unfortunate that I cannot mention that above us in this assembly are people who have been working most of their adult lives toward this day. There are times in this portfolio, not often, that you walk away with a great sense of satisfaction that hope has been provided. These people from the CYI who have been here all week and out in front of the House of Commons yesterday were saying to each other: "We have been waiting 20 years". I cannot imagine working 20 years on one piece of legislation but they have and they have worked hard.

One stretch I was at went on for five solid days. That is the kind of commitment we saw in the last few months of drafting the agreements. With Canadians like these there is a lot of hope for our country, that they have that commitment to their own people and to Canada. They are to be commended.

I would be remiss if I did not mention in closing the help of the hon. member for Yukon. I received some excellent briefings from that member. When all the paper was piling up and I was not sure exactly what was happening underground, I would speak to her and she would tell me the way it was. I really appreciated that.

• (1625)

I urge all members to give the legislation speedy consideration and passage so our fellow Canadians in Yukon can begin to enjoy the new life that they have hoped for and worked so hard to obtain for two decades. This day is here and they are to be commended.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-34. In response to the Minister of Indian Affairs, who mentioned that he finds some days very satisfying, I will confide that I found the last 24 hours extremely dissatisfying and very arduous. First reading took place yesterday morning at 10 o'clock, so you can imagine my surprise when, in the afternoon, a pile of documents, one foot high, appeared on my desk for me to read before today's debate on these two bills. We are dissatisfied because we worked well into the night and are exhausted.

Fortunately, we were basically already in favour of self-government. If we took the trouble to review these documents as thoroughly and as humanly possible under the circumstances, it is because we had in mind these people in the Yukon who have been waiting for so long to see this matter of great concern to them finally settled.

Consequently, we did our utmost. We may have missed a few things, but for our part, we are in favour of Bill C-34.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute all those who dropped by my office during the week. On Monday night, we received a delegation from Yukon. I immediately cleared up an unfortunate misunderstanding, and I would like to do the same here now.

The Bloc Québécois never intended to delay the presentation of this bill. As you know, there has been a problem with the translation of the maps, but my party decided that it would not oppose the first reading. We mentioned that to these people from Yukon, because rumours had been going around in the north and in Yukon to the effect that we would oppose this bill at first