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TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I rise to advise the House of Commons of the sudden loss of 600 textile jobs in the city of Woodstock as a result of the closure announced yesterday of the two Harvey Woods plants which have been that city's largest employer for many years.

Due to problems unrelated to either local plant management or free trade with the United States, TAG Apparel Groups Incorporated of Mississauga went into receivership on February 28. We understand that the receiver has not seen fit to accept any offers which will allow the local plants to continue in operation.

While we acknowledge that the over-all economy of southwestern Ontario is not suffering, an island of unemployment of significant degree has developed, causing untold hardships and anxiety for countless workers and their families.

We look forward to any assistance that may be forthcoming from the federal Department of Employment and Immigration through its local Canada Manpower office, using appropriate components of the Canadian Jobs Strategy.

At the same time, however, we call upon the government to recognize islands of acute hardship by offering financial help to local small businesses, textile or otherwise, that might be able to expand and absorb many of the recently laid-off workers.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Commission on Passenger Transport in Canada announced that it would hold public hearings.

Yesterday I wrote to the chairman of the commission, Louis Hyndman, as follows: "Allow me to tell you that I find it inequitable, discriminatory and unfair that the commission will not go to the remote areas of Quebec, such as ours, and I feel that the commission has excluded northern Quebec."

However, I would like to tell you that the way rail transport in the Abitibi, with National Transportation

Agency Decision No. 45-R-1990; passenger transport by Via from Montreal to Senneterre and La Sarre; air transport, with the departure of Air Canada; highway transport, with the Trans-Canada 117 North; and marine transport on the coast of Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay is handled is instructive and says a lot about passenger transport in Canada.

The people of Abitibi-Témiscamingue cannot legislate their geography, but they have serious reasons, based on their past and present experience, to want to live decently in the future and to be able to attend hearings where they live.

Mr. Speaker, is it possible this commission is afraid to come to Abitibi and hear from northerners?

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• (1410)

[English]

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiag): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I make the following statement.

History was made in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories last week. The N.W.T.'s six aboriginal languages have been recognized as official languages in the Northwest Territories.

Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Inuktitut and Slavey, as well as English and French, now have official status in the N.W.T.

The new N.W.T. Official Languages Act recognizes the presence of aboriginal peoples, centred in the N.W.T., but also present elsewhere in Canada, as a fundamental characteristic of Canada.

It also states that the existence of aboriginal peoples, speaking aboriginal languages, makes the N.W.T. a distinct society within Canada.

By recognizing the languages of its first peoples, the N.W.T. has provided important national leadership for all of Canada.

When we accommodate our differences with respect and goodwill, we contribute to the building of a nation which truly reflects its constituent peoples; a nation which is strong and secure in its diversity and confident about its future.