

Supply—Forestry and Rural Development

that the program as outlined for that province will prove of great benefit, particularly in the rural communities.

The minister referred in his introductory remarks to the policy of the department and it is in this connection I wish to make a few concrete observations. In the estimates for the coming year ending March, 1968, I noticed that the special contributions in connection with items which were specifically indicated as being subject to performance by the federal department and the provinces in co-operation, have been eliminated. I refer particularly to the items of forest inventories, reforestation, forest fire protection, forest access road construction and stand improvements. I realize that the arrangement made with the provinces is of such a nature that the work will possibly go forward in any case—indeed, I should say “undoubtedly” because this is part of the deal with the provinces. However, since the items are no longer pinpointed, no longer so specifically a part of the arrangement, there is a danger that they may lose their place as far as priority is concerned.

It is the importance of this priority that I should like to draw to the minister's attention in order that, to the extent he is able, he might see to it that the provinces carry out the original undertakings which are included under the headings to which I have referred. I see no reason why a province should be able to say: We have received so many millions from the federal government, but we do not place these five items in a top priority classification because we feel there are other items which should be dealt with earlier.

The minister should not listen to such nonsense. He should reply that the \$8 million or \$10 million, whatever it was, had been earmarked for these specific purposes, and though provision was not made for them specifically when the change in the federal-provincial financial set-up was carried out, nevertheless provision for these things was made by inference, and it was understood that these important programs would be continued. I bring this to the minister's attention hoping that to the extent he is able he will see that the provinces give these items the priority they deserve.

I am sure everyone within the sound of my voice this afternoon will agree with me that there is nothing more important than the prevention of forest fires. I have had some experience in the so-called fighting of forest

[Mr. Flemming.]

fires and I tell you, Mr. Chairman, that there is no such thing as fighting a forest fire. One can circumscribe it—prevent it from spreading to a certain extent; but one cannot fight it.

I see you are looking at me, Mr. Chairman, as though it might be five o'clock. If you wish to interrupt, I suppose I have no choice.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It being five o'clock it is my duty to rise, report progress and request leave to sit again at the next sitting of the house.

● (5:00 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Sauvé: Mr. Chairman, has the time now come to ask the unanimous consent of the house to continue the debate on supply until six o'clock, in the hope of completing it before adjournment? I understand the hon. member for Chapleau (Mr. Laprise) would probably agree to it.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: According to standing orders, the hon. minister must make that request when the Speaker is in the chair.

[English]

Progress reported.

[Translation]

Mr. Sauvé: Would the house give unanimous consent to continue the work in committee until six o'clock, in the hope that the study of estimates of my department might be completed? I think the hon. member for Chapleau, whose notice of motion was to have been discussed during the private member's hour, would be agreeable if the other members agreed also.

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I accept the suggestion of the hon. Minister of Forestry and Rural Development.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the private members hour be suspended for this sitting and that the house revert to committee of supply to deal with the estimates of the department of forestry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Tardif in the chair.