

Supply

We had a healthy contribution from the new Government of British Columbia for the Civic Centre complex in Prince George. That was announced on Friday. We are pleased with that. This government is prepared to spend billions of dollars on helicopters for which there is some question as to their need and yet a community that needs an art gallery and what have you is given the cold shoulder by this government. That is not good enough. We deserve and expect more.

As well there are a couple of transportation matters that are critical to ridings line mine in northern British Columbia where transportation is an important issue because of our location. I am pleased to have been able to work with community groups and others.

There is a new instrument landing system being put into Prince George, a project costing around \$2 million. I am pleased to have been able to do that but we have more work to do, and I think of air strips outside of the Prince George area where in some cases we cannot even get a medivac jet in to take someone out.

If members from large urban communities would not be able to get an ambulance they would be shocked by that, yet that is what we have in many of these communities. The government has to make a commitment to provide the necessary infrastructure and programs necessary to provide these services to Canadians regardless of where we live in the country.

The finance minister at least alluded to that at the first ministers' meeting in Toronto on the economy some time ago. Prior to that he mentioned that the government has tucked away somewhere a capital projects fund.

I have written to the minister. I would like to find out a little bit about this fund. How much money does the Minister of Finance have tucked away somewhere? Is he going to spend it all in the run-up to the next election campaign as the Prime Minister was to apt to do prior to the last election campaign? Let us get some details on that capital projects fund. Let us make it public so we can see what is available and at least give communities across the country an opportunity to make representations to the minister for funds from that project.

One of those infrastructure programs on which I have been corresponding with the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Transport and the British Columbia minister of transport is the Yellowhead Highway program, which we used to have. It was a program that helped upgrade the Yellowhead Highway from my colleague's riding, Skeena, through my riding in Prince George—Bulkley Valley and down into the Kamloops area, represented by another of my colleagues.

That program was allowed to collapse and run out by this government and by the former government in British Columbia. I asked this minister in this government on behalf of the people along that highway and on behalf of the minister of transport for British Columbia, who has asked us to make representations to the government, to go ahead and hopefully renew that program.

At the earlier First Ministers' Conference that I mentioned, the Minister of Finance hinted at a national highways network. When a Minister of Finance is hinting at something like that we should take him up on it. However it is his turn, we have taken him up on the offer to renew this program. I now want to hear from the minister and this government whether they really are committed to an infrastructure program that can help rebuild those transportation arteries which we require all across the country.

I hope that before this House rises for its summer break the minister can make that kind of announcement to give some assurance to Canadians and the people in northern B.C. that this very important transportation link has the attention of the Government of Canada and will be dealt with, approved, and renewed in the near future.

I mentioned airports and air transportation. I mentioned highways, and the unique federal role in this particular issue, one which I do not think is thought of much in western Canada. When I drive on any of the roads in eastern Canada I note that there is significant federal presence in working with the provinces in highway reconstruction. We just ask for the same in northern British Columbia. I do not think it is asking too much for this government to treat one end of the country the same as the other.