

The hon. member for the New Democratic Party who spoke said that the Fort Nelson Band was selling out their aboriginal rights for a cash settlement. That is not so, Mr. Speaker. He also said the Fort Nelson Band agreement would give them the funds to assimilate themselves with the rest of society. That is definitely not so.

I should like to point out that three years ago the Department of Justice sought a number of legal opinions to see if, indeed, the Fort Nelson Indian Band had claims to the natural resources that existed in their area. The opinions were to the effect that this was not the case. A private law firm in Vancouver concurred with those opinions and told the two chiefs and the band that this was not the case and that they indeed probably did not have any claim. The two chiefs then approached the British Columbia government and negotiated what is, in essence, a settlement out of court. I think they are to be commended for this.

We, the Canadian people, have said over and over again that the Indian people have to learn to run their own affairs. This is a prime example of Indian people taking the initiative and running their own affairs. They have settled out of court for an immediate cash settlement and also for a partnership with the British Columbia government in the development of resources on the reserve. It goes beyond the reserve, because they will receive 50 per cent of the revenue. In other words, they have entered a 50-50 partnership with the British Columbia government. I think they are to be commended for this.

This agreement can set a precedent, Mr. Speaker, but not one that is going to jeopardize other agreements. The bill has set limits in order to ensure that this will not happen, but it will open a new avenue that will result in many more agreements being reached with different bands across Canada because of the foresight, courage, and integrity of these two Indian chiefs in their approach to this problem.

I support this bill wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

* * *

● (2040)

MUNICIPAL GRANTS ACT, 1980

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-4, an act respecting grants to municipalities, provinces and other bodies exercising functions of local government that levy real property taxes, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): As hon. members are aware, there are seven motions standing on the order paper at the report stage of Bill C-4. Motions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 seem to be procedurally acceptable, and it is the Chair's intention to propose these motions to the House separately.

Grants to Municipalities

Motion No. 4 standing in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Yurko) seems to be out of order on the grounds that it seeks to add an additional annual grant to municipalities which is not contemplated in the royal recommendation attached to the bill. May I refer the hon. member to citation 540 of Beauchesne's fifth edition and Standing Order 62 in this regard. The hon. member for Edmonton East may wish to offer argument on the procedural acceptability of this motion and, if so, I will recognize him for that purpose.

Mr. Bill Yurko (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I have been caught with my notes in my office rather than here, so I will speak from memory.

With regard to Bill C-4—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is seeking the floor on a point of order.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As a convenience to the hon. member, I wonder if we could not take the motions in order? Let us do motions 1, 2 and 3 and then the question of order on No. 4 can come when we get to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): If that suggestion is agreeable to the hon. members, we will proceed in that fashion.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Yurko: Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak on this matter without necessarily having my notes before me. The first thing I would like to say is that we were very pleased to have the opportunity in committee to hear a number of witnesses from the municipal level of government presenting to the committee the very excellent case with regard to their views for receiving what might be called grants in lieu of taxes for federal property in their constituencies in relation to the services which they provide to the federal government for their facilities. There were, of course, several recommendations made by most of the people presenting submissions to us. One of the most strident ones was the fact that the minister was given arbitrary powers to decide matters of technical importance, for example, assessment procedures. As a result, we have proposed a series of amendments in committee which we hope to bring before the House. Nevertheless, the minister was very accommodating in indicating to us that he would be prepared to set up a committee to review the nature of submissions made in revising the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I would draw to the attention of the hon. member that I invited him to put any arguments he had with regard to the acceptability of his amendment which we thought was not acceptable. If not, we will proceed with the bill on clause 1. If that is the wish of the hon. member, he will be recognized.

Mr. Yurko: Mr. Speaker, on the suggested amendment which has been ruled out of order, I have already withdrawn