

Government Orders

agreement is signed, could be up a week later, the agreement being the one by the local authority to take over the operation of the airport. That is not much protection.

I also question the loss of the human resources. We have literally hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women working for Transport Canada at airports across this country. They are people who have made a commitment to the services of Canada. They are people with expertise. They are people who have been moving up the system. Do we all of a sudden cut them off and say: "We no longer want you; you are stuck at that airport for the rest of your life"? Or, do we cut them off from our federal system and they end up applying as external applicants, should something come up? This would mean that someone who has been in a number two position at an airport cannot move up to number one in another airport. We are losing a lot of talent and I think that is a real shame because the human resources of Transport Canada, by and large, are extremely well qualified and an asset not just to the ministry, but to this country. I think the government has overlooked that in its desire to carve out these operations and turn them over to the local community.

The other area that I am concerned about is the actual impact on the local economy. I have seen press reports. I have seen briefs from community-based organizations which say, yes, let us run the airport because we are going to set up basically a whole new mall in the airport to sell things, goods and services. Well that may work in a city like Toronto, it may even work in a city like Ottawa where your urban centre is at a distance from the airport.

However, let me ask you about the city of Thunder Bay which is one of the communities which has a group interested in becoming the local authority for operating the Thunder Bay airport. The airport is basically surrounded by the city now. There is no question about that. So if additional retail space is developed, designed not just to provide services to the normal clientele of that building, i.e. passengers going into and out of Thunder Bay and, in some cases, going through the airport as part of the regional hub that Thunder Bay has become, we are going into the community and drawing customers to a new facility on federally owned land, paying money to the federal government at the expense of existing small

businesses and not so small businesses in the community. So there is that concern about that aspect as well. I think it is one that the government has not really considered nor, quite frankly, has the communities which have been so eager to wrap their arms around the concept.

The final point is that these communities, not all, but certainly mine—and I believe I have talked directly to the minister about this—is that they believe that becoming a local authority means megabucks following for the Minister of Transport's pockets, that they believe that that is the way that they will get their terminal rebuilt or their terminal expanded. I want to say today, because I have not said it publicly in Thunder Bay, but I want to thank the Minister of Transport for the decision not only to improve the existing terminal in Thunder Bay, but to accelerate the process so that we will have a new facility in time for the 1995 World Nordic Games which Thunder Bay is hosting.

Having said that, the community group that is interested in acquiring control of the Thunder Bay airport does so, at least in the public sense of believing that that will accelerate capital moneys, and I say they are wrong and the minister, I think, would agree with me that that is not part of the package so people should not be misled.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time is up. I look forward to seeing this legislation in committee to make sure that we can beef up the components that deal with labour, with the workers, and pensions although, quite frankly, I wish the government would reconsider the policy of devolution to local and provincial authorities because I think the time is here that we maintain airports as a fully operated, fully controlled, fully financed federal authority.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan to discuss a bit more about a couple of the concerns that we have with regards to this bill.

We have seen the situation where the federal government privatized CN Route and the absolute fiasco of what happened there where the assets were stripped, the employees lost all their benefits and their employment and where this federal government refused to have an adequate inquiry to protect those employees. The