

*Rural Airport Development Advisory Committee*

their operation and development. Airports in the national category are classified as primary, secondary, Arctic or satellite airports. Community airports are classified as feeder, local industrial, intermediate local, small local or remote, depending upon their traffic index which is determined by a formula involving a whole panoply of factors which I will not elaborate upon at this time.

I wish to digress for a moment and speak about my district airport. It is called the Niagara District Airport. It is situated half way between St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake. It has triangular landing strips. The main strip is 5,000 feet in length. In addition, there is some hanger space. It is now operated by a private firm which keeps its planes there. There is a new control tower. If I am not mistaken, it is being considered by the Department of Transport for an instrument landing system. To make the proper use of this airport, the commission administering it wishes to have an additional 1,000 feet added to the runway. This would make the runway 6,000 feet long. Nowadays many types of jet planes require a runway of at least 5,000 to 6,000 feet in view of their rapid landing speeds of around 150 knots. In bad weather or with severe winds it is a little difficult to set a plane down with less than this length of runway.

● (1730)

The main reason for this local airport wanting the extra 1,000 feet is that just across the Niagara River lies Niagara Falls, New York, the centre of a large air charter business. A great many people from as far west as London, Ontario, from all over the Niagara peninsula, Brantford, Kitchener, Toronto and Hamilton are attracted to that city to take a charter flight, particularly to Florida or the Bahamas. The request of the Niagara Falls airport commission has already been forwarded to the Department of Transport, and I have endorsed it, as have two hon. members opposite whose ridings are in the neighbouring area. With the extra 1,000 feet of runway, charter flights using, say, 737s and that kind of aircraft could start at Toronto or Windsor and touch down at the Niagara district airport near St. Catharines to pick up people from the area; in other words, round off a beautiful flight. There is a great deal of business there for air charter companies.

Later, the commission hopes to take advantage of the interurban STOL program that is developing. It has not yet commenced to any extent in this country; I do not think the service between Ottawa and Montreal is yet in operation, but it is something for the future. In other words, there is a very great need in many communities such as those referred to by the hon. member for Skeena. They are forward-looking communities with airports and have a lot going for them. Eventually they will need a great deal of assistance.

The annual increase in the amount of money for this purpose from \$1 to \$2 million will make it possible to help a great number of airports deserving assistance, which previously was not the case. In the long run it will benefit municipalities and the aviation industry. I think the application made by the Niagara Falls airport commission outlines this very well.

The implementation of this policy of assistance has encouraged municipalities to continue the operation of

[Mr. Railton.]

national, secondary airports. It has also encouraged greater participation of others in the financing of airports. This has been in keeping with the government's objective that the cost of such facilities should be borne, to the greatest extent practicable, by the users and other direct beneficiaries of the facilities. The support that the government has received in response to its program of assistance for municipal airports has been most encouraging.

I cannot imagine, Mr. Speaker, that Bill C-102 could possibly enhance the program within the specific context of the program as presently applied. A bill with such wide terms of reference would serve only to confuse priority planning which is already underway and would relegate to limbo, in my opinion, many worth-while and urgent requirements. While there can be no question that the transportation challenges that face us in Canada are very severe and require energy and imagination, there is no point in replacing existing structures indiscriminately until we have established our long-term objectives. Only then can we determine accurately the types of management mechanisms and legislative frameworks with which we can successfully and comfortably operate our sensitively balanced transportation system. It is very important to realize that these matters are under study, and how fast we develop various areas really depends upon traffic requirements. In the past we have impulsively leapt at short-term solutions and hoped that they would serve as long-term blessings; but much to our chagrin the one-day wonders turned into multi-year blunders. I am not here to dwell on the nightmares of the past. After all, the resiliency with which Canada has fought back from adversity with renewed vigour has made us the envy of industrialized nations. We have had outstanding achievements in many fields, not the least of which is transportation.

The question of airports has always been a sensitive though vital area of concern in Canada. Our dependence upon aviation may be greater, at least on a per capita basis, than that of any other country. There can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the prophets of doom and the exponents of the status quo, aviation planning in Canada has been remarkably responsive to our economic needs and has ensured that disparate points of view and life styles have not been entrenched due to isolation. Lines of communication and channels of commerce have remained open, due largely to the efficiency of our aviation planning, and have bound this nation together when skeptics felt that such efforts were futile, or at least unpromising—something like the national dream. One has only to look back to the days when Dorval and Malton airports were attached as being located too far from Montreal and Toronto, their respective city cores. However, today these same wailers are complaining about airport infringement on the seams of urban expansion.

It is an irony of our times that we cannot satisfy people even when presented with only two possible choices. The hue and cry over Mirabel and Pickering in our two largest cities will one day be replaced by another brand of criticism—hindsight bemoaning too little instead of too much. It would appear that many communities do not plan or foresee the aviation vacuum caused by relentless economic expansion and its concomitant transfusion of people from rural to urban communities.