

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

In all those instances, the track could be dismantled, and it would then be very costly to put it back in place. In the case of the above-mentioned CN subdivisions, the request concerns a section of transit line which would then become sidings and which would be less useful for inter-regional transport. Moreover, the great flexibility given to railways in this regard could lead to requests for the abandonment of lines which are presumed viable now.

In this respect, the—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

• (2030)

[English]

**Mr. Thacker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was just wondering if my friend opposite would like to put in his order for breakfast because we are having bacon and eggs brought in. I wondered if he wanted his eggs over easy or straight up.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the kindness of the Parliamentary Secretary who allowed me to take a few seconds' rest to continue with more enthusiasm to criticize this bad Government legislation.

I was quoting from a memorandum prepared by the Government of Quebec—

**Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Gray).

[English]

**Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I wonder if my hon. colleague from Papineau could give some indication to the House of the length of time he will be speaking. What he has been saying we spent the last 16 years living and I wonder if he intends to go for another 16 years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) has the floor.

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that on third reading the spokesman for the Official Opposition has unlimited time. Considering that the Government wants to speed up things and has imposed time limits, we were prevented from discussing properly a series of amendments we would have liked to introduce, we had to vote without debate on a number of significant amendments introduced at the report stage. Since debate on third reading will be limited to four hours, I feel perfectly free to speak for as long as I wish.

Moreover, I am not really speaking for myself, I am merely speaking for the thousands of Canadians who made representations to the Standing Committee on Transports and were ignored by the Government. I am sure that they are glad to see that, through me, their objections will be on the official record of proceedings of the House of Commons Debates.

I was talking about a document put out by the Quebec Government which says, and I quote:

“A leaked internal document from the CNR, about ceasing all marketing efforts for about 1,600 kilometers of lines in the St. Lawrence area, has the Quebec Minister of Transports worried and he is asking the federal Minister of Transports to act to prevent the CNR from destroying a rail system which is very useful to Quebec.”

It is essential, before these transport infrastructures are finally withdrawn from service, that all parties involved have access to a range of alternative services better suited to the present needs of the economy. This underscores the need for an abandonment policy flexible enough to take into account the different requirements of the various regions of Canada.

Obviously, this Government which is tightening the budgets of its Crown Corporations and is literally starving a company such as the CN will do nothing to convince it not to abandon some of its branch lines.

So, it must be recognized that in spite of our efforts and the amendments we have presented, the Government decided to go ahead. Our railways will have problems because American railways and trucking companies will take a large share of the Canadian market, and all the Government has to say is this: You are going to incur losses, but if you wish, you will be allowed to abandon some lines in order to save on maintenance costs.

This is a short-sighted policy which is indeed contrary to the national interest and which is not only going to impede regional development and disadvantage the most remote areas of the country, but also completely strangle Canadian railways in the short or medium term.

Furthermore, this is a bad and deficient legislation because this Government refused to establish clear accessibility standards for the disabled in the National Transportation Act.

We have witnessed some kind of a tragi-comedy in the Transport Committee when the time come to vote on the amendments that our party moved—there was also one amendment from the NDP—relating to the legitimate requests of the associations for the disabled.

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister felt suddenly in a minority position because a few tender hearted Tories were ready to support our amendments, which would have allowed us to amend Bill C-18 as requested by the groups representing the disabled.

At the last minute, the Parliamentary Secretary said: No, do not vote now, I would first like to consult with the Department's officials and legal advisors to make sure that this