

Oral Questions

However the hon. member must realize that an answer was provided by the Minister of Health. The specifics were provided to the House. I am sorry the hon. member does not like the information he is getting. I guess the hon. member would want me to say that it was \$184 million and not something substantially less than \$5 million.

The facts have been provided by the Minister of Health. All the information is readily available. I indicated on a previous occasion that if the hon. member wants the details all he has had to do is ask, slip us a note.

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[Translation]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance in his capacity as Minister responsible for regional development in Quebec.

This morning, we learned that as part of its rationalization plan, VIA Rail is planning to cancel service on the Montreal-Gaspé and Montreal-Chicoutimi runs and to severely curtail service between Montreal and Abitibi. In other words, after denouncing the cuts to VIA Rail when they were in opposition, the Liberals are maintaining the policy of the Conservatives and abandoning rail passenger service.

Does this mean that once again, VIA Rail will be streamlining its operations at the expense of Eastern Canada, and in particular, of Quebec which will experience far more drastic rail service cuts than Western Canada?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the document to which my hon. colleague is referring is an internal VIA Rail document. There is no question that the negotiations currently under way will determine to a large degree where service cuts will be made.

If there is no dramatic improvement in VIA Rail's ability to provide service within the budgets allocated by the federal government, then some major changes will certainly be made. However, no final decision has been made at this time because the negotiations are still ongoing.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, how will the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec be able to sanction cuts of this magnitude which will hinder regional economic development in Quebec by severing an essential link between the regions and Montreal?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the decisions that are going to be taken with respect to the

rationalization of services provided by VIA Rail are going to be taken from coast to coast, not just in the province of Quebec.

• (1450)

The negotiations that are being conducted right now with employees and with the management of VIA Rail are going to have a significant impact on what we can provide in terms of rail passenger services for Canadians within the restrictions that were announced a year ago in a previous budget and confirmed in the budget brought down in the House in February.

How well we do in these negotiations will have a direct impact on how much rail passenger service we can protect in the country, in Quebec and elsewhere.

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GREENPEACE

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

Over the past number of months Greenpeace has been carrying out a misinformation campaign in Europe regarding forest practices in British Columbia.

Canadians are sick and tired of their tax dollars being used to support special interest lobby groups. If groups such as Greenpeace wish to engage in political activities, they should rely solely on the contributions of their supporters and not on backing from Canadian taxpayers.

Will the minister undertake a full scale review of the criteria used to determine tax exemption status for Greenpeace and other non-profit organizations?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the tax exempt status of many organizations is under close review by the department. There is a series of cases where we have withdrawn that privilege from an organization for misuse of funds or not abiding by the required rules.

With respect to the particular issue of Greenpeace I will take the member's representation, but I know of no examination taking place at the present moment.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Given that this misinformation campaign is costing the Canadian economy both in terms of lost revenue and lost jobs, what is the government doing to counter this misinformation campaign in Europe?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, once more the member should recognize that we live in a democracy where people are expected to have differing opinions on many important issues. We have no intention of attempting to restrict free debate, provided of course that it does not violate the normal rules respecting libel or slander.