

benefits everywhere. All Canadians are aware that we must reduce the burden of the debt. Canadians have been asked to tighten their belts, and VIA could not be an exception. Should we ask Canadians to do something and say that VIA is an exception? It is not viable. It is terribly expensive. Canadians do not use it. But we keep VIA Rail for \$641 million, \$800 million or \$1 billion a year, it doesn't matter. We spend that money when we have other modes of transportation that need to be supported.

• (1310)

The government has distinguished itself during the past year through fiscal responsibility and judicious allocation of federal financial resources.

Mr. Milliken: After doubling the debt.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): The member opposite should know that there are so many examples to take on this side of the House on the management of the country and its finances. The member should cry over the legacy that his party left to the country. Canadians have to pay today for errors made at the time the Liberals were in power. They never knew that when money is scarce it has to be spent in the best way, where it is most needed and where it is most likely to produce results.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues opposite and all my fellow citizens to look at the record, to judge the facts and accept them. Of course we have had hard decisions to make since 1984. Mr. Speaker, I have been a Minister in this Government for five years and every year, difficult decisions have had to be made in every department. We made them because we did not want the situation we inherited in 1984. It is not what I would have wanted to inherit, but it is what we got.

Mr. Speaker, about a year ago now, Canadians recognized the hard choices the Government made and the decisions it took. Today Canadians accept responsible financial management combined with sound economic policies that lead to economic growth. This morning at the opening of the First Ministers' Conference, the Prime Minister recalled that Canada's economic growth is one of the best in the world, especially in the last five

years. Of course we see the break in 1984 and we understand why.

Mr. Speaker, I tell Canadians, I tell my fellow citizens and my colleagues in this House that as responsible people, we do not have the right, even in transport, even with the difficult decisions that have to be made for VIA Rail, to leave a legacy for which Canadians would hold us responsible for not making decisions when the time came to make them.

[English]

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the minister, as I always do. We do not see eye to eye on a number of things, and certainly on VIA Rail we do not see eye to eye.

I want to respond first to the minister's challenge when he says that opposition members have not said where we would cut. We have said where we would cut. We have said that if you lower interest rates you would save \$1 billion a year on your deficit. A drop of 1 per cent would save a billion and a half dollars. We say drop it down. There are answers out there if you look for them.

I want to put to the minister a number of very specific questions arising out of the report of the committee. He answered in the House today that a moratorium was not acceptable to him. We regret that, but for now I accept that as his view and hopefully we will be able to convince the Prime Minister to intervene.

The other part of the recommendation was a change in the royal commission to specifically ask it to look at rail passenger service and to come up with an interim report that deals with things like a legislative mandate and future equipment requirements. My first question is whether the minister will agree to the second part of the committee's report, which are the changes to the royal commission.

The second question is this. Is the government going to bring in a bill to give VIA its legislative mandate? Now, the third question. Under the minister's predecessor, Trans-Consortium—which was Bombardier and UTDC Cancar—came up with a design for transcontinental passenger equipment, a price that was acceptable to VIA and to the companies, but was eventually turned down by cabinet. Trans-Consortium then offered to finance the construction of those cars and rent them to VIA Rail. I want to ask the minister in all seriousness