attempts of the previous government to update it. In fact, it gets rave notices from everybody except that hon. member apparently.

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VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He will know that the report of the Standing Committee on Transport raised serious questions and in fact repudiated almost nearly every so-called fact used by the Minister of Transport to justify the government's cuts to VIA Rail.

Given this undermining of the minister's credibility by the committee, will the Prime Minister impose a moratorium on the VIA Rail cuts until the royal commission which he has appointed has had an opportunity to review rail passenger services and to report to this House? Will he do that?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend will understand that I cannot and would not accept the comments in the preface to his remarks either about the information contained in the report or the minister.

In fact, I think on all sides of the House it is widely recognized that among a group of very competent ministers the Minister of Transport has a very special place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: It is easy to give things away and to maintain a series of subsidies. It is difficult to cut back and to provide leadership. You get few compliments and very little gratitude. We are doing this not because it is popular but because it is right, because it is right for Canada.

The OECD has pointed out that the efforts of the Government of Canada are on the right track and will be rewarded by ongoing prosperity. That is what we want for all the people of Canada.

Mr. Angus: My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is again for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He will know that this was not an opposition report. This was an all-party committee report, adopted by the committee, voted on by Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats who called for a moratorium.

In that report they questioned whether in fact the environment would be harmed. They questioned whether or not there would be any savings. They questioned whether or not the per passenger subsidy would in fact drop.

Given these concerns, these question marks against the government's decision, will he now take his leadership role like he did when the government attempted to deindex seniors' pensions and announce a moratorium? We are not saying cancel the cuts but are asking for a moratorium until the royal commission has a chance to report, having properly reviewed the whole situation.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, the committee chaired by the distinguished member for Annapolis Valley—Hants provided both an excellent report and some very interesting advice. The government considered the advice of the report very carefully.

But it is the government's responsibility, having considered the advice, to take decisions and to provide leadership. We have taken those decisions which we firmly believe to be in the national interest, acknowledging as we do that any cut-backs in subsidies impact negatively upon certain groups and cause pain and disappointment. We recognize that.

I hope my hon. friend in turn will recognize that our principal obligation is to restore a degree of sanity to the public finances of Canada. We are in the process of succeeding, having taken the deficit from almost $39 billion down to below $30 billion, and we are well on our way to doing better.

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FISHERY

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The federal fish quota report of November 22, 1989 indicates that in excess of 26 million pounds of cod, haddock and pollock will be left unharvested by offshore fishermen in the Scotia Fundy area.

Will the minister finally make a concession to the inshore fishermen and transfer to them the unused excess quota that the offshore fishermen will not be using this year? Will he transfer it to inshore fishermen who have had such a dismal fishery in the last six months?