Minister of Transport inadvertently misled this House by accepting their word.

There seems to be little doubt that what went on was a classic case of corporate blackmail by Canadian Pacific in its attempt to establish transportation policy themselves rather than leave that to the prerogative of the Government of Canada. The minister was misled by Canadian Pacific; he in turn inadvertently misled the House. I believe this is a legitimate case of privilege and if you so find, Madam Speaker, I am prepared to move:

> That this matter be put before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections who could ask Canadian Pacific to appear before the committee to explain why they misled the House and how they can justify such blackmail of the Canadian people.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I might just say a few words. This discussion illustrates the difficulty with conversations. What I heard from my assistant and what he heard from the president of Canadian Pacific is very difficult to assess, but I think the substance is clear. Canadian Pacific is confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, their forecasts of the requirements for traffic in the area are such that they think the tunnel should be built. On the other hand, their revenue situation, presumably because of the Crowsnest Pass rate, is such that they as a private enterprise feel that the returns will not justify the expenditure. This is the dilemma they face. I was trying to report on that. I am sorry if I was a bit humorous. Sometimes, it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Madam Speaker: It seems that here again we are discussing whether a member of Parliament is satisfied with an answer given by a minister. This does not constitute a question of privilege. Moreover, the motion presented at the end of the hon. member's intervention is a substantive one, that kind of motion which can be used to refer questions to any other committee. I suspect the hon. member knows that.

MR. SCOTT (HAMILTON-WENTWORTH)—PROPOSED EXPANSION OF MOUNT HOPE AIRPORT—REMARKS OF MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I rise very briefly on a question of privilege. During a somewhat spirited discussion in the House of Commons last night between the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and myself, I once again tried to put on the record of this House that the previous Conservative government's commitment of $45 million to the expansion, development and upgrading of Hamilton civic airport was in fact a "go" decision.

The Minister of Transport, I suspect quite inadvertently, certainly not deliberately because I know he would not want deliberately to mislead the House, suggested that the $45 million was simply a commitment in principle; not a firm commitment by the former minister of transport and president of the treasury board, but just a commitment in principle. He suggested that if I had proof otherwise, I could bring it to the House and offer him that proof.

I was not a member of the Privy Council and I was not sitting in cabinet when that decision was made. There are other members in this House who were privy to that decision. I would just like respectfully to suggest to the Minister of Transport that that $45 million was a very firm commitment by the Government of Canada to go ahead with expansion and upgrading of Hamilton civic airport.

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, as I was at least one of the participants involved in the previous government with respect to this decision, I naturally read with interest the comments last night of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin), particularly those in response to questions put by my colleague whose question of privilege is now before us. I thought I might shed some light on this.

I think we are engaged in a rather unfortunate twisting of terminology. The truth is that on January 25, on behalf of the then minister of transport, the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), the then minister of labour announced that there would be a major expansion of the Mount Hope airport at Hamilton at an estimated cost of $45 million. He went on to state that as a result of the decision, and I quote:

—Transport Canada will shortly request proposals for consulting services involving the design of the terminal building and other related facilities.

Yesterday the Minister of Transport indicated, to use his words, that the decision of the previous cabinet was a decision in principle by the cabinet, and there was a heavy inference that it never received Treasury Board approval. In fact, much to my amazement, the Minister of Transport stated that if it had received such approval, it would be in the present estimates because these are the estimates of the previous administration.

The Minister of Transport is a veteran not only of the House but of previous governments. He knows that main estimates are prepared literally months if not a year in advance. The main estimates that we now have before us are estimates that were finalized in mid-December. The decision to go ahead with the Mount Hope expansion was made in January. It was naturally anticipated that as the funds were required, there would be supplementary estimates needed in order to cover that expenditure.

As far as the previous government is concerned, it is most important to note that cabinet approval in principle was obtained for an investment in the order of $45 million for the Hamilton airport development. Cabinet had also authorised the Department of Transport to proceed with the planning for the airport and to consult with the airline industry, the province of Ontario, adjacent municipalities and the general public in the course of this planning.

The justification for asking Treasury Board—and this has already been put into *Hansard*—simply for $220,000, which was something to be charged against vote 65, air transportation, capital expenditure, was to get the matter moving at the earliest possible opportunity. The agreement in principle was there. Unless the present government now decides to reverse