

Heritage Railway Stations

communities are keenly interested in preserving for future generations.

I wish to be brief because I know there are other of my colleagues who would like to speak in support of this measure, particularly the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton (Mr. James). He has some views about just how important this Bill is.

In closing I wish to congratulate the Hon. Member for Bow River for this very worth-while initiative. I can tell him that this week I will be communicating to my constituents that his Bill is moving through the House. I will be providing copies of it to them. I know that they will be simply delighted to read this Bill and to see that this important initiative is being considered by the House. I hope that all Members will see fit to support it.

Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) for introducing Bill C-205, an Act which is designed to protect heritage railway stations. These stations are very important to the lives and memories of Canadians and represent an important part of Canada's history. The Hon. Member for Bow River is doing us all a great service by reminding us of how important these heritage railway stations really are, and by reminding us that measures are needed to protect such stations, many of which are in serious jeopardy.

Indeed, as most of us are aware, far too many heritage railway stations have already collapsed under the wrecker's ball, or have crumbled before bulldozers. Often, too, heritage stations have been demolished with no warning at all, or, just as bad, after so little warning that organizing to save a station has been next to impossible. It seems to compound the tragedy when we lose a heritage building that might have been saved simply because of a lack of time to organize a community preservation effort.

Canadians have already lost too many of their heritage railway stations. These may have been built with public funds or with railway funds. However, it is indisputable that they have become part of our common heritage, and in a very real sense they belong to all Canadians. Thus, when a heritage station is lost in west Toronto, or in Ottawa Valley towns such as Pembroke and Arnprior, all of which have lost their cherished stations, often with little or no notice, the loss is felt by all Canadians with a sense of history.

However, despite the sad litany of irreplaceable stations that are gone forever, there is cause for optimism with respect to built heritage preservation, generally. We are already beginning to see concrete results as stronger measures to preserve the totality of Canada's built heritage are put in place. Now, under the present Government, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) has set up a national cost-sharing program to assist in the restoration of nationally significant examples of our built heritage. Under this program the

Minister of the Environment may contribute up to 50 per cent of the approved preservation project costs for each eligible site or structure, to a maximum of \$1 million.

This cost-sharing program was only recently announced. However, five cost-sharing agreements have already been signed, among them a project to restore the historic George Brown House in Toronto, and another to preserve the cherished and celebrated Saint John City Market in Saint John, New Brunswick. All together some 15 additional national historic sites from British Columbia to Nova Scotia are now under consideration for preservation or restoration cost-sharing.

I wish to talk for a moment about how maintaining these older railway stations is important to communities. For example, the railway station in Sarnia, Ontario, is a historical building. After submissions were made to VIA it undertook a major restoration job on this historic railway station. Rather than tearing it down and building a new one it was restored. Substantial amounts of money have been invested in it. It probably cost more to restore it than it would have cost to build a new station.

The original building was brought back to life, just as the original brick was brought back to life by removing from it all the ugly paint and so on that had been put on it through the years. The superstructure of the building was restored in order to make it safe. VIA spent the total estimated cost of restoring the whole railway station just to restore the structure of the building. It is of pride to our community. The area about it is now being landscaped and proper parking is being made and so on. It is an attraction to our American neighbours who drive across the border to take the train to other places in Ontario and the rest of Canada.

I was remiss not to mention the railway station in Sarnia earlier. I know that my colleague from Bow River will be very interested in it. I hope that he will be able to come to Sarnia some time in order to visit it. Perhaps he could take the train from Ottawa in order to have a good look at it. He could even take an overnight train and have a sleep on the way down. He could visit me when he comes to Sarnia and we could tour the facility together.

The cost-sharing program to which I referred under the auspices of the Minister of the Environment is being administered by the National Historic Parks and Sites Directorate of Environment Canada. It is the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada that recommends candidate sites for possible cost-sharing.

There are further encouraging signs in the specified field of preserving heritage railway stations. Some 24 of these have already been officially designated as national historic sites on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Doubtless, more will be so recognized in the future. Such a designation, while not placing owners under any but a moral obligation to preserve their buildings, do bring