

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***VIA RAIL**

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the Minister of Transport said, and I quote from the transcript, "The results of our study are clear. The restructuring of VIA will have a minimal effect on the environment. It will not result in substantial increases in energy consumption and emissions". That is what the minister said.

I want to refer the Prime Minister to the official document which formed the basis of the cabinet decision and which was tabled yesterday by the minister in the House of Commons. It is entitled *Review of Passenger Rail Transportation in Canada*. At page 110, this is what the document states: "The elimination of passenger rail service would result in an increase in fuel consumption by 63 million litres in 1990 and increase pollution; 62 per cent of VIA's passengers would be diverted to automobiles and 12 per cent to airlines. These two modes are far less fuel efficient and generate more pollution".

I want to ask the Prime Minister this, in view of what the official document says, slashing VIA Rail will have a negative effect both on energy consumption and on pollution, will he tell us whether when he approved the decision he had read the official document?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I maintain what I said yesterday. The Department of Transport did a preliminary study on the impact of the new VIA Rail network, and this study gave us the assurance that the environmental impact of the new network would be negligible. That is why we saw no need for an in-depth inquiry into the environmental implications of the new VIA Rail network.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from the official document tabled by the Minister in the House yesterday to justify his decision. He cannot contradict what his own document says.

For months, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport kept saying that we had to wait for the official documents. No rumours, no gossip!

Now I would like to quote from the French version, at page 111, because the Minister of Transport said yesterday that chopping half of VIA Rail would eliminate only 2,761 jobs. Here on page 111, we read that in 1988, VIA contributed \$860 million to the Canadian economy. Tourists who travelled by train spent \$660 million more, which represents 57,000 jobs.

A little further, Mr. Speaker, on page 114, we read that eliminating passenger trains would be a permanent drain on the Canadian economy.

Could the Minister or the Prime Minister inform the House whether they read the official document?

• (1420)

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, we are of course aware of the contents of the official documents, and I still maintain that establishing the new VIA Rail network represents 2,76 lay-offs. From the way the Leader of the Opposition read the document, one got the impression that a large number of jobs are related to tourism. I agree, but people or tourists are not going to stop travelling tomorrow morning because in some cases, certain parts of the railway network have been abandoned. They will use other means of transportation and they will continue to invest in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we will have a national network, a network that for the first time in many years Canadians will be able to afford.

[English]

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the minister can waffle all he wants. I am reciting the official document prepared by VIA Rail which formed the basis for the cabinet's decision and which he tabled yesterday to justify the cabinet's decision.

I would like to read another section. Does the Prime Minister or minister know that this official document tabled yesterday has this to say at page 103

"People over 60 and people with family incomes under \$30,000 tend to travel by rail more than the total population. In general, people with modest incomes such as the elderly, young and the people from economically