

*Oral Questions***AIRPORTS****MIRABEL—LOW RATING OF EMERGENCY SERVICES—
GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact that the International Federation of Airline Pilots has established a rating system for international airports regarding efficiency, emergency services and safety, and that only one international airport in Canada has a bad rating, it is second from the bottom in the rating, namely, Mirabel airport, what action has the department taken regarding the upgrading of the safety and emergency services there in view of the fact that that airport has a record of six incidents of loss of separation, meaning one plane coming too close to another, its personnel requires 34 minutes to get simulated accident victims to St. Jérôme Hospital, and its emergency firefighting equipment does not work off tarmacs or runways, as well as the fact that there is no airport personnel trained in paramedical services?

An hon. Member: That is terrible.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the date on that report nor have I had a chance to have comments on it. I know that after the opening of Mirabel there were a number of problems in developing some of the specific services, but I want to look at the report, its timing, and have some comments on it. I would be surprised if we had not made a good deal of progress in correcting the problems cited.

**LACK OF EMERGENCY SERVICE AT NORTHERN AIRPORTS—
GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, that report is today's and it is from the International Federation of Airline Pilots. On non-international airports in Canada the Canadian Airline Pilots Association has been conducting surveys and has, of course, been working closely with the ministry. I am advised that northern airports that are outside the main corridor from Halifax to Vancouver lack sufficient instrument landing systems, namely, the VASIS system which provides pilots with the capability to make a quick decision as to whether or not to land or keep on going in bad weather, or whether or not anything is being done about the inadequate emergency and paramedical services at northern airports. Would the minister tell the House that he can guarantee the adequacy of these kinds of services at all airports in Canada?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): That would take literally hundreds of millions of dollars and obviously is not possible overnight. We have been making very important strides in improving our airport facilities all across the country. We have indeed some of the highest standards in the world in terms of safety, convenience and equipment, and that must be remembered. But obviously our vast priorities present a tremendous challenge in terms of airport facilities required. On the other hand we must appreciate as well that that costs a

[Mr. Whelan.]

great amount of money and we have to look at that with a question in mind as to what we can do in any particular year.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact that the ministry and the government have continually placed budgetary considerations ahead of the safety and lives of passengers in this country—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benjamin: —in view of the lead time that is required to order emergency equipment, improve the system and train paramedical people, can the minister assure the House that the government in the budget being announced this Thursday night or in a statement which will be made shortly thereafter will announce a substantial increase in the funding and the ordering of the necessary systems and equipment for training at all airports in Canada?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we have a very important program of airport improvements in the budget and it is an ongoing one. In view of the fact that we have among the highest, if not the highest, standards of safety and efficiency at our Canadian airports, I can only characterize the hon. member's "in view of's" as nonsense.

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FINANCE**POSSIBILITY OF CANADA SELLING GOLD FROM RESERVES OR
REVALUING IT UPWARDS**

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. As gold auctions are now being held regularly every Wednesday once a month and the United States have hinted they might be selling some of their gold which they hold in their reserves, would the Minister of Finance indicate if any consideration has been given to Canada selling a portion of the gold held by the government of Canada?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stevens: Can the minister say whether any consideration has been given to valuing our gold upwards which is now held in the foreign exchange reserve fund?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The bank customarily records the gold in terms of volume rather than value. As the hon. member knows, the value goes up and down on what is now a free market. It seems that that is probably the most sensible basis on which to account for it.