

Transportation Policies

member of the steering committee. It is to monitor progress and provide advice and policy direction for urban commuter services. Grants are to be made to provinces and municipalities to assist in the purchase of commuter vehicles and related facilities. At the beginning of April this year this program covered about \$100 million. This is simply not enough. I allude to the \$290 million figure which has been referred to in the press and in the media over the last couple of years, which is the amount the government should be sinking into urban commuter transit.

In Toronto we have about \$58 million of improvements which are required for the Union Station operation—80 per cent under the great separation program for the Bathurst Street bridge and a 50-50 split on the renovations of the Union Station. The minister is sympathetic to the government providing this assistance and is very sympathetic to the whole question of federal financial assistance to urban commuter transit. But the minister cannot live in a vacuum. He has to operate within the context of the cabinet and has to live within the severe financial restraints which the cabinet has imposed upon him over the last year. They have taken a very commendable approach in terms of government restraint. Contrary to what the hon. member for Selkirk said, the Prime Minister has not closed the door to any federal financial assistance to urban commuter transit. I am sure some aid will be forthcoming in the near future.

I should like to talk about the government's transportation policy in the urban corridor between Windsor and Quebec City, which is the most populated section of this country and is a section which could support a high development of mass transit services, specifically rail. Hon. members in the Chamber who know me and know what I have said in the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications over the last few years, are aware of the fact that I am very partial to the enhancement of passenger rail services, especially where they can pay their way in the urban corridor. The government has started to change its thinking and has started to make an effort to upgrade passenger-rail services in the corridor. Unfortunately the government has to do a somersault and completely change its thinking over the past 25 years, which has emphasized the development of air services in this country. I should say that is to the government's credit, because air services in this country have done a lot for Canadian unity.

Last week when returning from the maritimes I flew Air Canada from Halifax to Toronto. Within two hours I was transported from a very distinctive region of Canada, which is isolated in many respects, to the heart of Toronto. This was the result of very fast, efficient air service. Air services have brought the country together. Canada is second to none in the world in the development of air facilities. Perhaps we have been a bit too generous in the amount of money we have made available, especially for airport terminals. I am thinking of the expansion of the Toronto airport, Dorval, and now Mirabel. I understand there is also expansion under way in Edmonton. The hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski), if he is paying attention, would be most interested in hearing that. I

[Mr. Collenette.]

believe we spent a lot of money in Calgary as well on improving their air terminal.

● (1740)

Having established these terminals, having established this high quality of air service, I think it is incumbent upon the government, especially at a time when energy shortages are quite apparent, that we must develop more energy efficient forms of transportation. In the urban areas, in the highly populated corridor, rail is the only answer. As a result of the over emphasis on air, rail service has deteriorated in the corridor, as it has deteriorated across the rest of the country. But air services themselves in the corridor do not necessarily make money, and the best figures that I could get from Air Canada show that in the last few years they have been losing around \$10 a seat on their service between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, which anyone in the Chamber who travels the route would find quite astounding considering the amount of patronage given to the air service in that corridor. But it is purely a question of economics.

To put planes up in the air between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal is very costly, and it is the long-haul passengers from the west and from the east who, for many years, have subsidized the travel of intercity passengers in the corridor region from Quebec to Windsor, and especially in the Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto region. It is my contention that the government should be doing even more to upgrade rail services, increase speeds and general efficiency, and computerize reservations for passenger rail service in the corridor.

The minister has announced a couple of programs which will help to achieve that end. One is the \$30 million capital assistance program for new equipment which, I understand, initially was to be used in the Quebec, Montreal service, but which apparently will be used for the purchase of equipment throughout the corridor. The second is the introduction of a 100 per cent subsidy, the rationalization of non-profitable services, and in general the bringing together of the subsidy money that the government pays for passenger rail service now and putting it into services that have some form of commercial viability.

At the same time that the government is doing this, I am quite worried that it is perhaps undoing a lot of the good work that it has set out to do. I refer specifically to the proposed development of a STOL service between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. I think the government should do a lot of soul-searching about its equity position in de Havilland aircraft in Toronto and in encouraging STOL service in the corridor region.

As we know, the government owns about 80 per cent of de Havilland. Of course it wants to sell these planes but until now it has not been able to do so. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien) said in the finance committee recently that we only have a firm commitment for the sale of one Dash-7, and the reason we cannot sell the planes is that we do not have purchasers in Canada. I suppose the thinking of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce is that if