

*Oral Questions*DETERMINATION OF FINANCIAL LOSSES INCURRED BY
PASSENGER TRAINS

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, the Minister would then obey the law when it is too late to restore the routes, because the equipment has been scrapped. The minister neglects to explain how he is going to replace 250 or 300 railway cars that have been scrapped, with 50 new ones.

I have received a report from the Canadian Transport Commission which states that the determining of financial losses for passenger trains is inadequate. It recommends a thorough review of railway accounting systems as applied to VIA. Since the minister's decision to abandon VIA service is obviously based on outdated and inadequate information, as is pointed out by the CTC, will he at least delay, if not rescind, the abandonment of those passenger routes and appoint a commission of inquiry into the financial relationship between VIA Rail and the railway, since obviously VIA is being overcharged for services by CP and CN?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am quite sure that if my old friend, who is keen to inform himself fully on these matters, consults further with his advisers he will probably learn—and I am sure of it myself—that there has been quite a substantial improvement in the auditing and disclosure of information concerning costing order R63-13 of the Transport Commission. I think the president of VIA will recognize that quite easily.

In regard to costing order R63-13, I have to tell the hon. member that we have a joint study between Transport Canada and the CTC which is examining it in depth. I am quite willing to go to the Transport committee to discuss it with members of that committee because I think that these are really the major problems which confront us now. This particular aspect was to be looked at, and I would be very keen to go to the committee to learn member's views on the matter because this is the most urgent subject that has to be debated.

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ETHNIC GROUPS

CONTRIBUTION OF HUNGARIANS TO DEVELOPMENT OF
CANADA

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parkdale-High Park): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Multiculturalism. As we all know, tomorrow marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Hungarian uprising of 1956. In keeping with the spirit of the motion presented today by my colleague, the hon. member for Don Valley West, would the minister please express the sympathy of members of this House to all those who lost family and friends in that struggle for independence, and would he also acknowledge the great contribution that people of Hungarian origin have made to the development and cultural heritage of Canada?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Order.

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Yes, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join in the spirit—I hear some objections from the other side of the House but I am sure that is not the feeling of all on that side of the House.

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. That really was not a question to elicit information.

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INCOME TAX

TAXATION OF NORTHERN BENEFITS

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. Is he in a position to report on the findings of an interdepartmental committee appointed to look into the whole question of taxation of northern benefits and which resulted in a remission order with respect thereto? Since the deadline of the remission order is getting closer and the budget is getting closer, is the minister in a position to tell us today what he intends to do to help northerners cope with the incredibly compounded cost of living in the areas of housing, energy, and all that is associated with today's crises?

Hon. William Rompkey (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I certainly share the idea that northerners are suffering under high costs possibly more than other people in other parts of Canada. As the hon. member knows, the remission order is in place until the end of December. The government is reviewing the situation, and at such time as the policy is changed an announcement will be made in the House. I have no such announcement to make today.

POSSIBLE BUDGETARY PROVISIONS

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the minister to address himself to the question of whether he is confident that there will be a reflection in the budget with respect to this very crucial problem. Could he tell us today whether the notion of using the Income Tax Act to allow northerners to claim greater deductions from their personal incomes in an effort to achieve more equality and fairness with others is acceptable, recognizing the need of northerners for greater incomes to allow them to cope with excessive costs? Is the minister confident that something will be reflected in the budget? Is he pursuing the notion of using the Income Tax Act to achieve greater equity and fairness with respect to raising taxes throughout the country?

Hon. William Rompkey (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that the budget is under the purview of the Minister of Finance. It would not be my place to discuss the budget before it comes down. The hon.