

figures to be absolutely sure that the decision to be made is in Canada's best interest. If we did, I am sure other alternatives could be found, other ways to meet the needs of Canadians.

There is a last point I would like to make. Like a number of other Members, I have a concern for our small, remote communities mostly in the north. It seems to me that there is a principle here that is absolutely basic to this country's very existence. As we know, a significant number of Canadians live outside urban centers. What they want, what I would like to give them as much as possible is a quality of life that compares favorably with what we have in our urban areas. I don't think there is any argument about that! It seems to me that a key ingredient is a transportation system, whether roads, airports, railroads, that can give them not only a sense of belonging, the feeling they have their fare share, but also the feeling that in a not too distant future they will enjoy the same quality of life as is enjoyed by citizens of Canada's largest centers.

I think it is essential to reconsider, if only for fundamental reasons such as ensuring that residents of small or remote communities have access to the same quality of service than city dwellers.

To sum up, there are four reasons. Firstly, we are now going through a constitutional crisis. This seems to be another decision that was used to break off long established ties. I think it would be worthwhile to preserve them and to reexamine our options. Secondly, let us think about these 2,700 people, men and women, children, parents and relatives. Soon we will be celebrating the holiday season. What a present we are giving them! If we made that decision, we could give them a great present and offer them some hope and—who knows—we could perhaps, with enlightened minds, find less drastic, threatening and difficult alternatives.

Thirdly, I told you earlier that some premiers are supporting us and asking for a moratorium. This request is not without support, mine included, except for the two big provinces. Of course, it is all very well for the Atlantic provinces and the West.

My last comment is this: Let us not forget our small, remote and sparsely populated communities that still want the same thing we, city dwellers, want: a quality of

life that compares favorably with that enjoyed in the major centres.

[English]

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address this motion on behalf of the constituents of Winnipeg North. The motion introduced by the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte states:

That this House approve the recommendation contained in the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Transport, calling for a moratorium in the Government's proposed cuts to VIA Rail.

In arguing this motion, my colleague has spoken of our VIA Rail system in beautiful language, referring to it as "the ribbon of steel that binds our country".

I support this motion because I would like to see all Canadians from coast to coast served by an excellent passenger rail system.

In speaking to this motion, I would like to quote freely from the report of the Standing Committee on Transport so that Canadians across the country may hear some of the highlights of this report in order that they may judge for themselves as to whether we are right in arguing that a moratorium be established as a consequence of this study by the Standing Committee on Transport.

• (1530)

In introducing its report, the standing committee said:

— the committee believed that it could not ignore the public concern and reaction and therefore decided to hold public hearings in Ottawa on the future of rail passenger service.

The members of this committee, the majority of whom belong to the government party, decided that they should hear the concerns of Canadians first hand. As a consequence they went further:

As a result of the establishment of a Royal Commission (on national transportation) which will examine in depth the place of rail passenger service with a national transportation strategy, the Committee felt that its hearings should be compressed in order to report its findings to the Government before the cuts come into effect.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the essence of this motion. The committee tried to do overtime work, but careful and diligent work. It has presented a report so that the government could address the issue of a moratorium