Relocation of Railway Lines

hopes for clarification I wish to thank members for listening so carefully to what I have had to say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House is ready for the question I shall now proceed to put it. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

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RAILWAY RELOCATION AND CROSSING ACT

PROVISION FOR PLANNING, ACQUISITION OF LAND, GRANTS, GRADE CROSSING ASSISTANCE

Hon. Ron Basford (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-27, to facilitate the relocation of railways lines or rerouting of railway traffic in urban areas and to provide financial assistance for work done for the protection, safety and convenience of the public at railway crossings, be read the second time and referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps before the minister commences his remarks it should be recalled to the House that an order was made earlier concerning the number of speakers from each party.

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish first to say how pleased I am to move, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), the second reading of Bill C-27 and to explain to the House his absence. He is appearing before the standing committee on his estimates relative to the Ministry of Transport. Either the minister or his parliamentary secretary will be closing the debate as the second speaker for the government. I am happy on behalf of the minister to begin the debate on this bill. I also want to thank most warmly the House leader of my party and the House leaders and members of the three opposition parties for the arrangement the House entered into earlier today that this bill would be dealt with in Committee of the Whole and that there would be two speakers from each party at the second reading stage.

Mr. Paproski: You always get agreement from this party.

Mr. Basford: The hon. member gets that kind of agreement for his party because he is dealing with a minister who is very easy to get along with. In respect of the order of the House limiting the speeches to two from each party, I wish to say that many members of this House would have liked to have spoken on this bill during second reading. Certainly, judging from the correspondence I have had from mayors across Canada and from many other people in respect of this bill, I am sure many members of parliament who are involved in the affairs of their city would have liked to have spoken during this debate on behalf of their city councils.

The railway relocation and crossing bill is divided into four parts. The first part deals with joint urban develop-

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

ment and transportation plans for relocation schemes. Part II provides for special grants for separations. Part III provides for railway grade crossing assistance. Part IV is the general clause relating to the transitional provisions of the Railway Act under Bill C-27. As Minister of Urban Affairs, I have particular responsibilities assigned to me with regard to Part I. Parts II, III and IV are clearly the responsibility of my colleague the Minister of Transport. Part I is very clearly urban legislation. It is directed to and at urban problems. By way of relocation schemes in respect of railway facilities, it holds the potential to improve the urban environment in many cities and towns across this country.

● (1610)

The railway relocation provisions of this act will be a major lever when this bill becomes effective and, through orders of the Canadian Transportation Commission, in reshaping the core areas of our cities and many of our communities. There are cogent and pressing reasons, which have obviously been recognized by all parties in the House, for the introduction of this bill and for its speedy passage.

As we all know, railways have been caught up in the rapid urbanization which is occurring in this country. They, as have other elements in our economy, have been caught up in the rapid development of our cities and in the problems of urbanization. In many instances, the railways bisect cities and towns, and create noise zones. They are traffic impediments and safety hazards. Their location determines in a social sense the right and wrong side of the tracks, to use an old expression. In many instances, railways and rail facilities occupy prime urban land that might be better developed in a number of ways to improve the quality of urban life. Their influence on the growth of many of our cities has obviously been pervasive. One only needs to visit cities from Halifax to Vancouver to see the part that railways have played in the development of all our cities. Often the city has developed because the railway was there, and then other cities and towns grew up around that railway junction.

One of the first priorities of this government was to examine how federal action could be brought to bear on the range of urban problems created over the years by the relationship between railways and cities, and the presence of tracks, yards and other rail facilities in urban centres. This review that we conducted made it clear very quickly that new legislation was needed to permit the federal government to help integrate railways and rail facilities with urban development, especially in inner city and core areas.

The legislation that has been introduced is a major federal initiative to help achieve a better balance between the need for efficient rail services and the adverse effects of railways on the quality of the urban environment and urban development in Canadian communities. It is designed to apply to cities where railway facilities— tracks, yards, terminals—are formidable obstacles to planned and orderly urban development; and to meet the demand for new or improved grade crossings and grade separations. The railway relocation and rerouting provisions will permit the federal government, for the first time in the history of this country, to fund and support in a