

*Oral Questions*

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. I listened to his press conference very intently, and what he told us today was that there are 2,761 jobs lost because of this 51 per cent cut. Now I know for a fact that is not true. Just taking CN and CP employees alone it rises to 3,600 jobs. The minister did not put that into his little quotation of those jobs that will be lost.

Taking that into account, I have the following question for you, Mr. Minister. Exactly how many jobs? Can you tell this House the honest truth about how many jobs will be lost? There are not only 2,700; there will be way more. How many will there be? Tell us the real truth about how many jobs will be lost because of the 51 per cent cut.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, I tabled official documents concerning job losses and for once, instead of referring to leaked documents that provide false information, I urge you to refer to the documents you were given this morning, where I say that the VIA Rail closures and cutbacks will result in 2,761 layoffs. We recognize the problems due to restructuring, but I must say at the same time that the collective agreements governing those who work for the railways in Canada are among the most generous in the country and will cost \$140 million over five years. I think that the Government has been generous with these employees in accordance with the signed collective agreements, and I ask the Opposition Parties to admit that finally, we in Canada will have a rail transport system that we can afford and that can last.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, nowhere in this country—

**An Hon. Member:** Here we go.

**Mr. Speaker:** I don't want to hear what I just heard again. The hon. member for Sudbury.

**Mrs. Marleau:** Nowhere in this country is transportation more important or more vital than in northern communities. Yet, Sudbury and many other of our communities are receiving one blow after another to their transportation services.

• (1440)

Just this past Monday we were told that Air Canada was stopping all services to Sudbury and other communities in northern Ontario. Today, we have the shutdown of VIA Rail in northern Ontario and across this country.

Mr. Prime Minister, why have you brutalized the regions of northern Ontario this way?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bouchard (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, I do not agree with my colleague about the northern part of the provinces. For the particularly remote regions, we have maintained nine so-called remote routes in the national transportation system so that citizens who do not have other means of transport can still travel.

As for Air Canada, Mr. Speaker, deregulation has made it possible to develop a series of quality airlines like Air Nova, Air Atlantic, Air Alliance and Air Ontario in this country; these regional airlines provide communities with services they did not have before. Air Canada is a private company that has the right to withdraw from some of its activities. But at the same time, Air Ontario will continue to provide services and to give the people of Sudbury the services they had before. It has not been proven that the services of Air Ontario will be inferior to those of Air Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian transportation system is complex, but using private enterprise and public services, we are giving Canadians the best.

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport just announced that more than 1,800 jobs will be cut in Quebec, including 900 in Montreal. He added that Montreal could easily absorb these losses. In other words, nothing to get excited about. What a relief for the employees who are being laid off!