

*Supply**[Translation]*

I must admit that I was a little surprised and even amazed to see the motion that the Bloc Québécois has proposed to us. On the one hand, the Bloc Québécois often complains; its members claim to be concerned about the deficit and the debt and often say that we must cut unnecessary spending, we must cut what they call waste, a big term which is still undefined and for which we have never had a valid explanation.

● (1520)

I wonder if the Bloc Québécois's definition of waste includes exceptional expenditures, which the government cannot make as a government. We still have to find out the answer.

[English]

Members of the Bloc inform us that they condemn the policy of the government in regard to railroad. I go on record as profoundly disagreeing with that proposition. As a matter of fact I congratulate the minister for having, and I will use the parliamentary term, the intestinal fortitude to address some very important issues in the area of transport, be it rail, maritime or air transport.

I never could understand, and the minister put it very eloquently in a speech that other members and I heard recently, when he said there were airports in Canada that were receiving two million passengers a year and getting zero dollars of subsidy and there were airports in Canada receiving \$2 million a year in subsidies and getting zero passengers. There has to be something wrong with that system and the minister has the courage to address those important issues.

[Translation]

The same applies to rail transport. In my region, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, we have a rail line joining Ottawa and Montreal, the Alexandria subdivision. Trains use that track to reach these two big cities. But what happened? In 1986, CN threatened to close the subdivision. It was uncertain whether trains could run between Ottawa and Montreal, and of course it meant the end of passenger transportation between the two cities since VIA Rail uses the CN track.

Today, there is an agreement between CN and CP to maintain the subdivision jointly, and CN and CP trains use the track. This increases traffic on it, increases profitability and ensures the long-term survival of the line in question.

When the news that CN wanted to close the subdivision was leaked in 1986, you know what happened. Alexandria Moulding, a company in our riding that employed about 200 people, ended its expansion plans. Why? Because there was no long-term security. Today the minister is on top of these issues.

[English]

In my opinion the minister should continue in areas such as permitting local groups to start up short line railway operations. That process needs to be sped up. For instance, if CN, CP or both in the case of the Alexandria subdivision because it is to be jointly operated, need to shut down part of their operation and if there is a group of local businesses, municipalities or whatever that can keep that short line operation going, we should welcome it with open arms and not spend years and money arguing before various boards and organizations. We need to assure that whoever operates a short line railroad does so with all the safety standards involved and so on. That is guaranteed.

The process has to be accelerated to make these kinds of things happen. The minister is interested in it; he needs to be praised. On the other hand, some provincial governments, particularly those of the pink persuasion, our socialist friends particularly in Ontario, have established what are known as successor rights in the area of railways.

● (1525)

What have successor rights done? By the way the same thing has happened in Saskatchewan, and guess what kind of government it has. Yes, some more of those pink dinosaurs as well. The pink dinosaurs at the provincial level have established those successor rights laws in three provinces. The effect is such that some of the short line railway operations cannot get going because of successor rights.

Here is what happens. In one case in Saskatchewan a small piece of rail line was handed over to a local group. That small piece of rail line did not need a whole variety of employees. I believe it had 18 employees who at that point were in 14 different unions. Does that make sense? It does not make sense to me.

Let us use the example of an even smaller short line operation that would only require a handful of people. Because of the different union contracts a short line operation could not start up. It would have to hire staff it did not need. In other words, the person operating the breaker would have to be different from the person on the train because there are different unions and that sort of thing. Therefore people would be standing there doing nothing while the other one does his or her operation. Does that protect jobs? No, not at all. Instead of having a short line we end up having no service at all and no service at all does not give jobs to anybody.

Perhaps the people in charge of socialist regimes at the provincial level should remember that. If they do not they will not be in business very long anyway, particularly not in the province of Ontario. Their future is doomed about the same as that of the government replaced a little over a year ago by the excellent government we now have in power.