

few moments, if I may, about the Liberal task force report on VIA Rail.

This summer there was a huge undertaking that this side of the House embarked on. We travelled across every section of this country with members of Parliament and with senators to talk to the people of Canada to get first-hand knowledge as to what they thought about this government's plan for passenger rail service in this country.

As a result of that trip and as a result of those excursions into areas that many of my friends from across have not had the opportunity to visit, we have been able to come up with some recommendations that we would like to put forward. One that seems to be predominant throughout all of the discussions is the one-year moratorium that my friend so ably discussed a few moments ago. What that means is just that, to stop everything in its tracks and let us do some studies and further assessments with respect to—

Mr. Belsher: Do you want to keep funding it?

Mr. Comuzzi: My friend keeps talking about letting the funding go on. If he would read the last annual report from VIA Rail and reports that came from the transport committee on the unions, he would find that by cutting out VIA Rail, the government in this next year is going to be spending more money in closing it down than it would be spending in operating and subsidizing it. The government would be spending more money by closing down VIA Rail, starting with this fiscal period, than it would be spending by operating VIA Rail as it is operating today.

There was a very shallow report brought in by this government on the environmental assessment, and that simply meant the impact of the closing down of passenger rail service on certain sections in this country and what would happen with the use of our highways and the use of our airways, the additional use of fuel. There was not a proper environmental study done according to the law of the land, and one of our recommendations was that that assessment be done.

We also said that VIA Rail required its own legislation, the VIA Rail act. That would allow VIA Rail to set its

own rates, rely less on this House, and go out and do its business as a reliable and viable transportation mode in this country. It never had its own legislation, and that is our recommendation.

We also talked at some length about the negotiations that have been allowed to carry on between VIA Rail, which really has no teeth, and CN and CP. In particular, we discussed the elimination of costing order 6313, the moratorium on all non-itemized expenses charged by CN and CP to VIA Rail, an in-depth explanation, a question that I have asked several times in the transport committee, of the \$142 million being charged to VIA by CNR and CPR and, in addition to that, the \$107 million charged in the last annual statement by intergovernmental accounting against the expense structure of VIA Rail.

• (1700)

It was our considered opinion that these questions should be answered. This moratorium would allow those questions to be answered before any further action is taken on the passenger rail service in our country.

We also went into great discussion and had in depth study on analysing what new rolling stock would be needed. The financial statement states that in the last two years VIA Rail has purchased and paid for 72 new engines, as many engines as it needs to operate the passenger rail service in this country. What is needed is passenger rail cars. If I could plug my area, we make magnificent double decker passenger rail cars in Thunder Bay. They should be given consideration, along with other manufacturers in Canada, to provide good passenger rail cars for our passenger rail service in this country.

We do provide passenger rail service and we do finance those passenger rail cars for our friends in the United States, Amtrak. Certainly if we can do it for our friends in the United States we could do it for Canadians.

There is another consideration that we would want to study in some depth in our recommendations, that is, the high speed train in the corridor between Montreal and Toronto and between Toronto and Windsor. We say in our report that that is the area in our country which can least stand any lessening of modes of passenger transportation and we should start on that immediately.