

and selling rights of way of the abandoned lines, the prospects of abandonment would appear much less attractive to Canadian Pacific Railway.

Railways, especially the CPR, have a commitment to maintain rail lines even if they are losing money. This argument is based on the fact that the CPR was heavily subsidized, received generous concessions and inducements for constructing the transcontinental line. Because of the almost limitless aid from the government, the CPR was a moderate success from the start. The total value of the government aid is almost impossible to estimate. There was \$25 million in cash. Large portions of the railway were actually built by the government and then turned over to the company at a cost of \$37.8 million. Also there were close to 25 million acres of arable land. The CPR received other concessions, especially in the area of railroad equipment and competition. Equipment was allowed into the country duty-free. The government assured the company a virtual monopoly until 1888.

Another serious consideration is the re-acquisition of rights of way once property is sold in transportation corridors. The cost of alternative transportation may be prohibitive. In the long run the cost of re-acquiring rail rights of way will make this more economic mode of transportation unjustifiably and needlessly expensive. The natural and obvious alternative is not to court these developments. Furthermore, the cost of re-acquiring rights of way in British Columbia, especially central and southern B.C., are higher than other regions in Canada.

The current routes used by rail lines are often the only viable passage. To circumvent urban areas in search of cheaper land in the future may be impossible. The only alternative would be to expropriate these lands currently being sold and developed as prime real estate property by Marathon Realty. Then they can be restored to transportation corridors at exorbitant cost to the taxpayer.

The hon. member for Scarborough East raised some concerns about the ramifications of the motion. He said:

Here are some of the considerations that I think cannot be met in this House in the broad scope he has given the motion. Supposing all of those properties revert to the Crown, what would be the burdens on the federal government in maintaining the properties in the meantime? Would it, in fact, wish to sell it off? Would any sales be consistent with long term planning in a municipality, or even a requirement that there be a federal-provincial agreement on long term transportation corridor needs? We do not know and cannot know unless we have much more information.

What the hon. member for Scarborough East said is true. Is there a better way to answer these questions than by taking them to committee? Also, the hon. member asked what city properties are worth in downtown Toronto if put into non-rail uses, and whether some of the properties now developed with multimillion dollar complexes would also revert to the Crown. He said that we should know the details of the amounts of money involved, and whether the railways would still have the opportunity to reinvest in railway networks. The only way to come to grips with these questions and the implications of the bill is to take it to committee. I agree with the hon. member when he suggested that the implications of the bill are serious,

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that detailed discussion and planning are needed to make this a cohesive piece of legislation. The only way to solve these questions is to take the bill to committee stage. In order to do that, I require the support of the House.

Once in committee, witnesses can be called to answer questions thoughtfully brought forward by the hon. member for Scarborough East. Witnesses can be called from the provincial and federal governments, as well as from the CPR and CNR. This will considerably speed up the process of gaining information. Also amendments could be proposed and dealt with in committee.

The Hall Report, which was compiled at the request of the Minister of Transport, is in agreement with my proposal. The Minister of Transport has shown his support of the proposal in principle, yet stories are circulating about secret agreements between the provinces and the federal government. These problems should be brought into the open. These secret meetings and agreements, which will affect transportation, should be disposed of. Transportation is the very lifeblood of this country. It is our responsibility to keep transportation corridors open. It is the responsibility of the government to prepare the future for our children and grandchildren. Perhaps I will never see the end of fossil fuels in my lifetime, but probably my children will. The importance of these transportation corridors will be evident then. We must get ready for the future. I appeal to the House to pass this bill. It will correct the unfair situation caused by attitudes taken by the railways on the abandonment of branch lines.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, given my prairie background I am understandably pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this particular debate regarding rail roadbeds this afternoon. On the prairies we perennially have no end of rail issues to discuss, debate and argue about. The sad thing is that until recently the issues we have argued about have been founded primarily upon bad news about the prairie rail system: the news of rising costs and declining service, the news of antiquated rolling stock and deteriorating rail lines, the news of possible abandonments, and nagging, lingering uncertainty concerning our rail system.

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Fortunately, in the past couple of years, the news has begun to turn around, particularly with the work of the Snavely and Hall Commissions which have touched upon the issue we are discussing today of roadbed ownership, among a great many other things.

It seems to me that to understand fully the rail situation on the prairies today and to be able to assess the motion now before us it is essential to put the Snavely and Hall Commissions into perspective, that is, it is important to see how that bad news scenario I just mentioned has turned around to a more positive situation.

To begin with, during the past decade or so, quite apart from the Snavely and Hall work, there have been several