

supporting certain individual route discontinuances was that they were not being used sufficiently by passengers. However, the Committee believes that this is something of an unbalanced equation in that now not only are many routes lost but the routes that do exist may be under-utilized due to the fact that potential passengers would have to incur increased costs and a great deal of lost time in making connections as a result of the remaining routes and schedules. This may result in a loss of revenue for VIA through a reduction in ridership on certain trains, which could in turn provide a rationale for further cutbacks. This, in the view of the Committee, would be a truly disastrous trend for rail passenger services.

This type of problem is further exacerbated by a deterioration in some services on the routes left in existence. These service problems include reduced train frequencies, less available sleeping accommodation, and a reduction in dining services. This combined with continued maintenance problems can only have negative effects on the VIA system. It is indeed commendable to wish to acquire new equipment for the system; this is in fact an essential requirement. However, if the existing routes are left to deteriorate in quantity and quality of service, the travelling public will not be much inclined to continue to use or to switch to these services.

### (iii) The Issue of Commuter Services

Some of the routes discontinued as a result of the Governor in Council's action last fall, included certain short haul passenger lines that were classified by Transport Canada as commuter services. The Committee understands commuter services to mean comparatively short distance routes involving the transport of passengers between suburban areas and a large nearby urban centre. The Committee has doubts as to whether all of the routes that were so categorized by Transport Canada are truly commuter services.

The Committee notes with concern that provincial authorities have expressed some reluctance to undertake control of this type of service in certain instances, and municipalities simply do not have the legislative or financial capability to step in should they wish to do so. This has already produced some serious problems for certain numbers of rail passenger commuters who find themselves either without service, with reduced service, or with the prospect of losing service in the near future.

**11. The Committee recommends that the concerned parties, namely the railways providing the service, the municipalities served, the CTC, the provincial governments and Transport Canada undertake consultations and negotiations prior to any route cancellations to ensure that commuter services will be maintained where necessary, either by VIA, or one of the other operating railways, or another entity should that be deemed desirable. The Committee emphasizes that this should be done prior to the elimination of such routes so as to avoid wholesale inconvenience and economic dislocation as a result of relatively sudden changes in long standing commuter services.**

**The Committee further recommends that a firm technical definition of commuter services be put forward by Transport Canada without delay. This will aid in ensuring that only routes that are truly commuter services will be transferred to provincial jurisdiction.**