

Supply

expend the dollars to provide them with the other modes of transportation which most other Canadians enjoy?

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to support this motion for a moratorium on the government's decision with respect to VIA Rail. There are a number of reasons which I want to share with members. The first one, which I consider of critical importance, is the reality that we are facing today with respect to a constitutional crisis of major proportion. We recognize that VIA Rail is a institution which binds the nation. It gets us to know each other. It gets us to understand what each other's aspirations, dreams, hopes and desires are for this great, wonderful country of ours. It is another institution which is being destroyed gradually, which is being dismantled. It fits, unfortunately, into a number of other decisions that have been made by government.

• (1520)

Members will recall that Air Canada was not for sale and it has now been sold. That is another institution that permitted us to travel throughout this great land, one of the largest countries of the world.

We all know that the unemployment insurance program was not to be changed. That was promised during the election and, of course, we all know as well that that did not happen. There have been massive changes that will affect people.

We know about the Canada-U.S. trade deal and I am not here to discuss the pros and cons but surely there is no one in this House who will not accept that it has had a major impact upon Canadians throughout Canada and certainly not all of them positive.

We know that today in the House there have been comments with respect to the reduction of transfer payments, actually the cutting of significant dollars, billions of dollars to health and education. In fact, between 1986 and 1994 it will amount to \$24 billion less for health and education.

We know that 31 tax increases have been undertaken by the government. We have talked extensively during the last few weeks about the goods and services tax and how it will touch and affect every single Canadian in this nation.

We know, in fact we have it in writing from a member of government that universality is in the process of being destroyed. These new programs that have been proposed by government will affect seniors and will in fact affect families.

The point I want to make is that there has been so much happening in this country that affects Canadians throughout that it has had a destabilizing effect, and this is one more decision that covers an institution that had as an objective getting us to know each other and reach out to one another. Even from this particular perspective, if we look at it in the context of the constitutional crises that we are going through today, it is worth-while considering and supporting this moratorium to somehow tone the tempers down a bit, to reflect and sit back to see what we might be able to do to bring us closer together.

The other point I want to make and another reason why we should consider this moratorium seriously is because we are talking about over 2,700 workers throughout Canada. We are talking about those workers being affected directly. We are not talking about the many, the thousands in fact of men and women who depend upon those workers for a number of service industries.

We are entering the holiday season. I want us to think about those men and women, their children, brothers, sisters and parents. What kind of holiday season do they have to look forward to? Let us just think of being faced with the same decision. How would we feel individually? How would our spouses, children, our friends and relatives feel? I cannot think of a worse time of year to implement this particular decision, to leave people with such little hope for the future.

[*Translation*]

There is another reason I would like to share with Hon. Members. You will surely know that Mr. Bourassa and Mr. Peterson today asked for a freeze on the cuts. Why? Because they want to look at what the options are. Is there something else they could do to maintain and improve services?

What I am saying is, if that request can possibly be granted—and I hope it will be—it is just as important that it also applies to Atlantic and western Canada.

It seems reasonable that, when in the process of making a decision that has such an impact on Canadians, we take the trouble to pause a while and review the