

Oral Questions

What Ron Lawless has already done to Moncton by putting 1200 CNR shop workers out of work is that today VIA Rail employees should get ready for their pink slips. Would the Minister confirm that the Government's hidden, or not so hidden agenda, is to remove or privatize passenger rail transportation?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said yesterday. Yesterday morning we gave VIA Rail the new reference levels pertaining to Government assistance to this Crown corporation. They are geared to the Canadian taxpayer's ability to pay, which is another way of saying that we can no longer afford to spend \$600 million, \$700 million or \$800 million a year on a passenger service of which Canadians themselves make very little use. So we have asked VIA Rail to make recommendations and come up with a work plan consistent with these reference levels, and on that basis the Government will decide what to do. Again I repeat that there is no hidden agenda behind the propositions I made to VIA Rail yesterday.

[English]

RAIL LINES IN ATLANTIC REGION

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, the former VIA president had a national dream and a national vision for VIA. This Government's only vision is to destroy our national rail service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: The Minister of Transport has stated that nine rail lines in remote areas of Canada must be maintained within the VIA financial plan. My question to the Minister of Transport is, why is there no mention of any rail line in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the remote lines which were described yesterday are exactly the same which were supported by VIA Rail as remote lines. They have not changed. The nine lines which are there right now are the lines which were there yesterday, exactly the same.

* * *

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FISHERIES ERDA AGREEMENT IN P.E.I.

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The Budget that was tabled on Thursday will shut down the town of

Summerside in western Prince Edward Island. Furthermore, we cannot find in the Estimates any moneys for fisheries sub-agreements for Prince Edward Island, nor any other Maritime province. Would the Minister now stand in his place and indicate that he will sign an ERDA for fisheries with Prince Edward Island, or is it this Government's intention to close down the fisheries on the Island?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my hon. colleague that in the near future I will be very pleased to discuss fisheries or other prospective economic co-operation agreements with the Government of Prince Edward Island.

FUNDING OF AGREEMENT

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same Minister. Will the Minister give us a clear answer? Will a new agreement for fisheries be signed with Prince Edward Island immediately? If so, what level of funding will be committed to such an agreement, and what cost-sharing formula will such an agreement have? I have to say to the Minister, do not leave the P.E.I. fishermen out in the wind.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a representation and assure my hon. colleague that I will be pleased, as I said before, to enter into discussions with the Government of Prince Edward Island, the Premier and the Minister, at a time when that seems to be suitable to them, to myself and to other Ministers.

* * *

TAXATION

DEFERRED TAXES—CORPORATIONS' SHARE

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Senior citizens who are now losing some of their pension, and those families who have been hit by an additional \$700 tax hike in this Budget, might be interested in the recent Statistics Canada report that last year deferred taxes of corporations reached a level of \$36.1 billion. That is \$6 billion more than the federal deficit. Those tax breaks when accumulated are more than the Government spends on health care, family allowance, old age security and social assistance.

I would like to ask the Minister if he projects the annual growth in deferred tax to decline, and what he is going to do to make sure these corporations pay their fair share of the tax burden?