

Oral Questions

always, has expressed a concern on behalf of his constituents. I am pleased to inform him that the eight families from Port Burwell will receive compensation by the Government of Canada of some \$2.5 million to go toward their relocation. The other part of the assistance is that, because they are beneficiaries under the James Bay Agreement, they will receive assistance in continuing their relocation.

The negotiation process, I believe, was successful. I believe all sides benefited, and we would hope to look forward to further negotiations on other issues involving the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement.

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AIR CANADA

SALE OF SHARES—TAXPAYERS' REPRESENTATION

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, on reading the Minister's statement for the third time, I have concluded that the most half-baked, hare-brained paragraph in the whole statement is an abdication of the Government's responsibility to the taxpayers. The Minister says that 55 per cent of the control of Air Canada will remain in the hands of the public, and in his statement he said that the Government will instruct the Chairman of Air Canada's board of directors to vote its shares in accordance with the public shareholders who are the minority shareholders. Who will represent the taxpayers of Canada who own 55 per cent of the airline?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman calls it a hare-brained, half-baked idea, but the Chairman of Air Canada said this morning at a press conference something to the effect that this initiative is good for the employees, good for customers, good for communities, and it is good for Canada. I think the Hon. Member should take that into consideration.

Air Canada has been functioning as a commercial corporation in a newly structured regulatory environment. It competes with the private sector and it behaves in every respect as a private sector corporation. As a Government we have not intervened in the day-to-day operations and management of Air Canada, and that is consistent with what has been going on in the past.

ACQUISITION OF SHARES—CONTROL OF CORPORATION

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I am just flabbergasted that the Tories are continuing a policy the Liberals started. I ask the Minister what, in his statement or in the Government's policy, will prevent a group of individuals who happen to be on the boards of several airlines, or several airlines, themselves from acquiring 10 per cent of the shares each and having effective control of Air Canada, or what will

prevent a foreign owned airline from having 12 per cent of the shares and having effective control of Air Canada?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, that is a rather convoluted assessment. If the Hon. Member looked at this again, he would find that only 10 per cent of the publicly issued shares could fall into the hands of one person, and that would be roughly about 4.5 per cent. In the case of foreign ownership—

Mr. Benjamin: But you're going to sell all of them.

Mr. Mazankowski: We made a clear commitment here that 45 per cent of Treasury shares are to be issued—

Mr. Benjamin: Initially.

Mr. Mazankowski: Maybe 10 years down the road, maybe five years down the road—

Mr. Broadbent: Maybe two years.

Mr. Cassidy: We'll make sure that you never do it.

Mr. Mazankowski: If it is in the best interests of the corporation to do more, that is when that decision will be taken—

Mr. Cassidy: Trust is the issue.

Mr. Mazankowski: Hon. Members do not want to listen to the answer.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

SASKATCHEWAN BILL—REQUEST THAT FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BE OFFERED TO PROVINCE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I want to refer to Saskatchewan's language law, Bill 2. We are told today by press reports that Mr. Devine, the Premier of that province, will not accept any amendments to his controversial language Bill.

Given that the powers of persuasion, powers that we thought would be the best avenue to use to convince Saskatchewan to be generous and open, have failed to bring the matter to a satisfactory solution, I wonder if the federal Government could not now use its spending power. As we know, the federal Government can offer financial and technical assistance. However, we are not aware of what the offer has been. Could the Prime Minister share with us what the offer has been and what he intends to do to come to an amicable, more generous, more open, and perhaps more caring solution to the problem?