

Supply

From Toronto to Niagara Falls it goes from 21 down to 14.

Let us look at the ridership on some of these trains that we are cutting back. It is 39 per cent, 50 per cent, and 56 per cent is the highest occupancy rate of the routes that have been in service. In other words, 44 per cent of the seats are going empty on all of those routes I have just mentioned.

The combined public and private spending on transportation in Canada over the next 10 years can only be measured in hundreds of billions of dollars, and we are talking about total transportation. Therefore, an effective consideration of such an integrated system required the government to establish a forum that would permit all Canadians to be heard in a thoughtful, comprehensive and forward looking manner. That is why the Prime Minister has struck a royal commission. It was announced at the same time that the cuts were being made to VIA Rail. It is to inquire into and report on a national integrated inter-city passenger transportation system to meet the needs of Canada and Canadians well into the future.

The size and importance of our transportation system cannot be overstated. Its future development must lead to a system which will meet the challenges of the 21st century, not just the 20th century. This royal commission will be asked to inquire into and recommend solutions on the role of a national, integrated inter-city passenger transportation system and its relationship to the entire transportation system; the structure of a suitable, multi-modal transportation system demonstrating the linkages and the potential for and constraints on achieving a national transportation system and, where appropriate, financial arrangements to achieve such a system, taking into account the jurisdiction of all levels of government and the role of the private sector. The commission will look ahead into the 21st century to advise governments on the needs of Canadians and on the relationship between the modes of transport of the future.

• (1440)

This royal commission through its wide consultation and broad mandate is expected to provide a clear action

plan that will ensure that the transportation links among Canada's regions are maintained and improved.

In making this announcement the Prime Minister stressed the importance of taking into account the wide range of interests of Canadians and the respective roles of all levels of government and the private sector in the provisions of inter-city services. He also emphasized the necessity to balance Canada's transportation needs with the government's policy of environmentally sustainable economic development.

This royal commission will examine Canada's unique social and democratic trends and look ahead to the ways the transportation system must respond to meet the competing needs and demands of users, operators, employees and other interested parties. The commission is expected to provide Canadians with a blueprint for a comprehensive, co-ordinated passenger system to take us well into the 21st century.

Mr. Nault: Mr. Speaker, I have a few questions to put to the hon. member. They relate to the fact that if you take a look at Revenue Canada's own figures you see that there has been a large drop in the amount of dollars in the last five years in transfer of payments to the provinces and other governments. By the statement he just made it is evident why. It is because he feels that the deficit is out of control. Furthermore, because the deficit is out of control the tax burden should be shifted to other governments to let them worry about it.

I have one question. Is he saying to we members opposite that the federal government will no longer give a high priority to the regions of Canada or where you will live. Is he saying that in essence if the municipalities and the provinces cannot look after places such as those in northwestern Ontario, where it was decided to remove The Canadian which ran to the major centres, and if they cannot afford to do that then it is too bad, they just happen to live there and that's it, that's the way it works.

The government seems to be transferring its problems. We on this side are not saying that there are no difficulties. We realize there are many difficulties. When I became interested in running for federal politics one of the reasons was because I believed in all of Canada, as well as the federal importance and the importance of the government to keep the regions and all of Canada as