

terrible disruption in their work lives and in their financial income.

I mentioned at the outset that I would like to say a few words about the Government's cut-backs on VIA Rail. The Government is asking for a borrowing authority of some \$24.8 billion. Then it turns around and pulls the rug out from underneath VIA Rail. I do not know what kind of thinking is going on in this Cabinet when it comes to transportation. I must say with complete openness and honesty that the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) is one of the great disappointments on this side of the House in terms of this Government. He has shown absolutely no innovative or creative approach to his job. The only approach that he has brought to Transport is to build down, cut back, close, shut down. It has been a totally negative approach. He is fighting change all the way. He is fighting improvements all the way. We already have in place a tremendous network of railroads in this country. We have a huge country. It logically follows that we should be promoting rail traffic for both freight and passenger services, particularly in those areas of the country where it is most difficult to move people around, most of whom cannot afford air travel which is going to get more expensive, not less expensive as the years go by.

• (1640)

Second, as a commuter service alone, there is tremendous justification in the so-called Golden Triangle between Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. If we increase the effectiveness and efficiency of rail travel between those three centres, it could relieve the pressures at Pearson International Airport, here in Ottawa, and at Dorval. We could reduce the number of inter-city flights by up to 100 a day if the speed at which those trains travel could be increased to a point where they could travel from downtown Ottawa to downtown Toronto in two hours. If the French can do it, we can.

If that service can be provided I suggest that there will be a response from the travelling public. Rather than pulling back and saying it cannot afford it because no one travels by train today, the Government should move ahead to improve the service, the number of trains and

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the speed at which they travel. Business people as well as people on holidays will automatically go by train because it is more comfortable. Those who have been around long enough to have travelled on trains long ago would probably suggest that it is a more gracious way to travel.

Trains can solve a very practical problem. It has nothing to do with nostalgia or dreaming in the past. The cost of air transportation is increasing and will continue to increase. The pressure at some of our airports is downright unsafe and extremely costly. Let no one be mistaken about the fact that this Government as well as previous Governments have substantially subsidized air travel.

Finally, our highways certainly in central Canada have reached the point where travelling through Toronto has become almost impossible. The Government's answer to this is to increase the number of buses.

Mr. Milliken: And cars.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Buses and cars. The province cannot afford to improve our highways, widen them or build any more. Yet the Government is dumping more and larger vehicles onto the highways by cutting back on VIA Rail.

While there were two or three other matters I wanted to raise, I see that my time is up. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak once again to Bill C-11, an Act to provide borrowing authority.

Mr. Whittaker: Madam Speaker, first let me congratulate my colleague for an excellent speech. He touched on a number of matters of interest, but unfortunately I cannot assist him in his predicament of not having enough time to complete his remarks.

I am interested in the issue of VIA Rail cut-backs and the problem that has for us in the future. The New Democratic Party just completed an environmental task force study on the uses and abuses of fossil fuels to learn about what we may look to in the future to assist in cutting back on various emissions.

Will the Hon. Member comment on how the Government's projections for VIA Rail would assist the environment? What suggestions does he have for the