

Report on Air Traffic Control Policy

• (11:10 a.m.)

In order to ensure that an adequate number of new controllers will be available to meet the increasing demand and also to alleviate the current shortage in some regions, the Department of Transport has begun a more intensive recruiting campaign with the immediate objective of engaging an additional 70 trainees over and above the normal number in the department's continuing training program. Other plans call for a further increase in the department's air traffic controller strength in order to keep up with the development of new airports such as those planned for Montreal and Toronto. Detailed studies are under way also to determine the best types of new equipment that should be obtained so that our controllers will have the most advanced and efficient technological aids at their disposal.

I can assure the house and the Canadian public that the Department of Transport will continue to give the highest priority to matters of air safety, and I am confident that through the measures I have outlined, and with the continuing co-operation of the controllers, we will preserve and enhance the enviable record that Canada has achieved in this field.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members of the house welcome the statement just made by the minister with respect to air safety in general and air traffic controllers in particular. This has been a matter of great concern in the press and elsewhere by members of the Canadian Air Traffic Controllers Association. The matter has on various occasions been brought before this house by myself, the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas), the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) and others. I think we are all delighted to see that the minister has fulfilled his undertaking to make a comprehensive statement in this regard; this is pretty good.

I should like to make one or two comments on the minister's statement. We are very glad to hear from him that plans are under way for greatly expanded airport facilities to serve Toronto and the southern Ontario region, which is by far the most densely populated region of Canada. Arrangements have already been made for the Montreal region. I hope that in the near future the minister will be in a position to give the

[Mr. Jamieson.]

house details of the expanded arrangement for Toronto and southern Ontario because there has been a great deal of interest and debate in that part of the country in this regard. I hope the minister will hurry up his planners so he can give us details in this respect at least when the house reassemble in the fall.

With respect to continual consultation on the matter of air safety between air traffic controllers and officials of the Department of Transport, this is an excellent move. I am glad to hear that arrangements are under way with regard to detailed studies that are to be carried out with respect to equipment and various arrangements for proven safety conditions. But I suggest to the minister that this matter could very well be referred to our Standing Committee on Transport and Communications in order that the committee can look into the question during the coming session of parliament.

There has in the past been some suggestion that departmental officials have brushed aside some of the suggestions of the air traffic controllers. I am not suggesting this is correct but one hears these allegations and I think it would clear the air if everybody concerned in these matters were brought before the transport committee. Those who have complaints or alleged complaints about air safety could then present their case to the committee. I would be extremely helpful if the Air Traffic Controllers Association in particular could do this. Officials of the department should be able to present their views to the committee together with any other interested and knowledgeable parties. The transport committee after hearing the views of people concerned in this question, might very well be able to make many worth-while suggestions.

If the program is to operate in the way in which the government suggested it would operate—it has not operated too well so far—this would be a good opportunity for one of the major committees of the house to accomplish something useful and substantial in the coming session.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I think I can meet the rule requirement that you have drawn to our attention on a number of occasions because I have brief comments on only two or three points.

First, I often wonder why it takes so long to get under way something that obviously needs to be done. The inadequate number of