

Adjournment Debate

better example do Canadians have than the example of the termination of the Halifax-Sydney run of VIA Rail?

As I said at the outset, and I conclude, it will operate to the disadvantage of elderly Canadians. It will prevent students from having affordable access to their educational needs in universities on mainland Nova Scotia. It will affect those Canadians in eastern Nova Scotia who wish to seek out and obtain appropriate health care by travelling to the provincial capital.

All of those things contribute to the belief, and I believe the evidence is very strong, that those Canadians in eastern Nova Scotia are being treated as second-class citizens by the Government of Canada and it should terminate that kind of ill treatment of those Canadians.

• (1815)

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the remarks made by my hon. friend from Cape Breton—East Richmond.

The government's decision on VIA's five-year corporate plan maintains a network of rail passenger service that will be national, affordable and sustainable. The network will continue to link Canadians from Vancouver to Halifax and will maintain good connections between eastern and central Canada, as both The Ocean and The Atlantic will continue to operate. No Canadian is being cut off from access to the national transportation system as a result of this decision including Cape Bretons.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond has raised the potential tourism impact of the discontinuance of VIA's Halifax-Sydney route. In response I would like to say that as someone born on the great island I am familiar with the many notable tourism attractions in Cape Breton. The Cabot Trail is world renowned. Ingonish Beach, the Miners' Museum in Glace Bay, Fort Louisburg at Louisburg, the Alexander Graham Bell Museum at Baddeck, and the Acadian Community of Cheticamp play a major role in the tourism industry of Cape Breton.

However, I must point out that these important tourism attractions are not accessible by passenger rail. People travel by automobile or by bus to visit these places.

We must also be aware that VIA's Halifax-Sydney service not only had a ridership drop of more than 40 per cent in 1984 but, as mentioned to the hon. member by the minister, also cost taxpayers about \$86 for every passenger it carried in 1988.

In light of these facts it is difficult to argue that VIA's Halifax-Sydney passenger service plays a vital part in the Cape Breton tourism industry. Those who wish to visit Cape Breton and the many attractions there will continue to do as they always have done.

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question follows upon the questions we have been raising in the last few days about government scandals.

Over the last few days we have been focusing on the conduct of one particular individual, a member of the Senate, and we are now assured not only that the Senate is considering holding a hearing into his activities in relation to two government departments but that the RCMP is also examining material about that individual.

But there is a much larger question which has not been answered by the government and which I want to see it address. I hope the member sitting opposite will be prepared to do so.

We are not talking about individuals' particular behaviour in relation to this government. We are talking about an over-all pattern which is emerging of the way in which this government does business.

The way in which this government does business stinks, whether we are talking about conduct which is illegal, and I can give examples of individuals like a former Conservative member of Parliament who was convicted of taking bribes; whether there is a criminal trial and the individual is acquitted, and I can refer in that case to former Conservative cabinet minister Andre Bissonnette; or whether we are not even talking about illegalities, and in this category I would put a case like that of Sinclair Stevens.

In so many instances in approaching this government for the use of public funds what has emerged is a pattern in which friends of the Prime Minister, people who are