

*Adjournment Debate*

road closures cut automobile and bus traffic more often along that corridor than in any other area of Canada.

In terms of remoteness, you have to travel 200 kilometres or more to get to an airport from the city of Revelstoke, for instance, and from the village of Golden. With regard to accessibility to bus transportation, those communities in the north are even more remote. Therefore we asked the Minister of Transport to send representatives to two meetings that were held, one in Golden in November and another earlier on December 4 in Revelstoke.

Because of transportation problems, the government representatives were not able to get to the first meeting. Hopefully the government learned something about remoteness in that exercise. It tried and failed and it is not even the middle of winter yet.

I understand that the representatives did get there on December 4, earlier this week. I trust that the information that was marshalled by a number of communities and businesses with a vital interest not only in the economic spin-off of passenger rail service to that area, which is becoming increasingly dependent upon tourism, will cause the government to recognize in those mountain passes the kind of difficulty there is without alternative methods of transportation.

Since the time that the government made its decision, of course, the transport committee of the House made its recommendation and asked for a moratorium on the decisions of the government. I would submit that the communities of Golden, Revelstoke, Field and others in that Kamloops-Calgary corridor are perfect examples of why we need such a moratorium, at least in specific cases, and hopefully on a broader scale.

I am sure there are other areas of the country where the decision also needs review. Once we remove the passenger rail system from the trackage which is heavily utilized by CP, or in some cases CN freight services, it is going to be very difficult to again get access to those lines once they have worked out other schedules.

I know the parliamentary secretary will appreciate this because he travelled with me when the MacDonald tunnel opened last summer. At a time when we have a 15 kilometre tunnel which speeds up and allows for increased passage of freight with much greater efficiency at a much lower cost, and frees a second line for

passenger or non-freight use, the government has decided to eliminate the passenger rail system through one of the most attractive areas of Canada in terms of tourism, not only in summer when the Rocky Mountaineer will provide minimal service, but during winter.

The government has its own statistics. I know from personal experience, and I suspect the parliamentary secretary and the minister have heard as well, that that rail line is over-utilized in much of the summer and close-to-summer months.

My colleague from Kootenay East and I spent some time travelling the rails there this past autumn far outside the regular tourist season. We had to sleep in the dome car, where you are not supposed to be overnight, because the train was full. People apply months in advance to get on those trains and are told that is full and they cannot get space. It is a heavily utilized line. It has one of the best cost recoveries of any section of the entire system, excluding the Golden Horseshoe.

With the arguments it has been given by businesses and communities in that area, I ask the government to at least proclaim a moratorium on that and other similar areas and allow a review to take place before the door is shut forever.

**Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. member opposite, the member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke, who has asked us about VIA service as it relates to truly isolated communities. I know the communities of which he speaks and have travelled through them on many occasions when I have been traversing on the Trans-Canada Highway.

The government's decision about a national affordable, sustainable system of VIA services strikes a balance between the transportation needs of Canada and the government's fiscal realities. The hon. member opposite makes out as if with every decision that is made there is great finality and that it is the end of the world. That is not the case in this situation.

Nonetheless, he does raise a very valuable point about the fact that he would like to see these communities considered under the same aspects as to the remote areas of the country.