

Oral Questions

strengthen that piece of legislation. We need it and we need it soon.

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AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. The minister will know that the Canadian airline industry is in a bad tailspin and, to make matters worse, yesterday the minister outlined in Toronto that the airlines will be forced to pay higher user fees, estimated to be upward of \$300 million by the chairman of the Air Transport Association of Canada.

How can the government think of imposing such onerous user fees on an industry that is already badly destabilized and when the blow will hit hardest those who can least afford it, namely the far regions and smaller communities of our country?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think the House should know the full story. Yesterday, in my remarks to the association, I referred to the consultation paper that had been put out to the industry in July of this year. I referred to the fact that we were open to consultation and that, in fact, we had extended that consultation period, at their request among others, from November 1 to February 1.

What is not in the article is that after I spoke my officials participated in a full morning session on the very issue of cost recovery. There are lots of consultations going on. That is what the whole process is all about. The consultation period is by no means finished.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I agree that on the one hand the minister agreed to extend the consultation, but on the other hand, yesterday, at a major airline conference in the country, he said very clearly that the airlines will be paying higher user fees and that there will be a new regime of those higher fees. One cannot have consultations and then directives in the same breath.

Again, why does the minister continue to threaten the airline industry with higher user fees? Those higher fees will break the backs of the smaller airlines, pass on increased costs to a travelling public that can hardly

afford to travel this vast country as it is, and, thirdly, exacerbate the regional inequities between the larger airports and those in the regions where, despite where one lives, all Canadians deserve quality air service.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the session was about. I suggested that there would be higher user fees and cost recovery. I said I was open to a consultation. That is what I was there for. That is what I was there the day before to do. That is what I did the evening before. That is what I did during the day. That is what my officials did yesterday. That is consultation.

Now, with my hon. friend's background, and the party he represents, obviously he would not know anything about that kind of consultation.

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THE SENATE

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. I want to return to the New Brunswick lawsuit.

The minister will recall that four times in the House the leader of my party suggested to the government that it refer this matter to the Supreme Court of Canada because of the constitutional chaos it could cause. She will recall that she once said that that was arguable. Then she went to Vancouver and had a press conference and said: "Well, I have been advised by the Department of Justice that the these senators represent all the regions in Canada and, if you do not agree with me, go to court". Well, we did and we won exactly on that point.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Waddell: How does the minister propose to get the eleventh MP from New Brunswick? Is she aware that that will likely include a constitutional amendment? Therefore, could she please tell the House which seven provinces does she have on her side to bring forward an amendment to agree to the GST?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in the hon. member's opinion that it would require an amendment to the Constitution to add that seat.