

### Supply

The second study considers the abandonment of rail service in Abitibi. It is estimated that total abandonment would cost the Government of Quebec \$3.9 million more a year, even with additional revenue from fuel taxes and trucking licence fees included.

Clearly, abandoning rail lines has a considerable impact on the finances of the federal and provincial governments. The government should therefore consider developing a comprehensive rail-highway policy. Decisions should be made in co-operation with the concerned provincial governments, since provinces are responsible for the road network and also have to bear the consequences of rail abandonment.

Beyond the financial considerations, there is also a human factor which must be taken into account. Traffic increase has a major environmental impact, in terms of pollutant emissions and noise, for communities located along highways. This increase also raises the risks of traffic accidents. The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec reports a 41 per cent increase in the number of people seriously injured in trucks, between 1988 and 1989. By comparison, the number of people injured in privately-owned vehicles dropped 12.9 per cent over the same period.

• (1605)

Another study allows us to conclude that an increase in the number of trucks on the road can only result in a proportionally much greater increase in the number of injuries and deaths.

According to the department's submission regarding the proposed construction of a railroad for the Laterrière plant of Alcan, trains are much safer than trucks. That document indicates that, while heavy road vehicles account for eight to nine per cent of registered vehicles, they are involved in about 23 per cent of all accidents. In 1987, there were 1,206 accidents involving trucks, compared to only three involving trains, for every million tons transported by these two types of carriers.

What is of more interest to us is the fact that freeways are four times safer than other roads for heavy vehicles. The problem is that there are freeways in central areas, but not in remote regions. These regions will be more affected by the higher risk of accident, on top of also being more directly affected from an economic point of view.

Railway transport is very important. It will face tremendous challenges in the years to come; competition is fierce and our society is on the wane. The federal government can no longer afford to subsidize unprofitable lines. It must find other ways to keep these lines in operation, because what is at stake here is the development of our regions.

Quebec does not want to see these essential railroads disappear and it does not want to foot the bill either. Quebec does not want to see its remote regions experience economic decline. It wants Ottawa to implement a co-ordinated transport policy.

Quebec wants to have a say in the decisions affecting railway transportation. It wants policies designed to keep carriers financially sound and technically advanced, while preserving the existing network to the greatest extent possible.

Through the voice of the Bloc, Quebec will make sure it does not get taken. The consequences of the Liberal vision on railway transport are too dangerous for Quebec's future. This government should provide financial support to the establishment of short line railways. Indeed, Quebec does not want to see more of these lines disappear, since they are essential to its economy.

The federal government must include the provinces in the decision-making process, because they are in the best position to take action on this issue. The government must give provinces every means to allow them to set up an intermodal rail-highway system.

**Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has drawn a rather accurate picture of the situation in the regions, especially where people depend on a railway system and where such a system is not only a guarantee, but also a tool for the economic development of remote areas, like the Gaspé Peninsula, large regions in Northern Quebec, the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area, and many more, I am sure.

I have a question for the hon. member, because I heard that the opposition could be interested in a national integrated policy on transportation. If this is true, then Quebec would have to agree to meet with the federal government and its provincial counterparts to come up with a common position and a real transportation strategy that would include rail, road and air transport.

• (1610)

I think we need to reach a consensus, a bit like what is done in other countries, like the United States, and even within the European Economic Community. Why does the Parti Québécois, the political party in office in Quebec, not ask to meet with us in order to draft a national policy?

As Quebec members in particular know full well, road conditions in the province of Quebec are rather appalling. Repair costs are very high. It does entail significant expenses for Quebec, but if Quebec and the other provinces were to meet with us to elaborate a national integrated policy on transportation, I am convinced that we could not only guarantee the vital link which the rail system represents for remote areas in Quebec, but also maintain and reduce the expenses incurred to upgrade the road system in la belle province.

**Mr. Fillion:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question which deserves a straightforward answer. Surely, Quebec is ready to sit with the other governments to discuss a complete and integrated policy for rail transportation as was done in the EEC countries that were just mentioned. These are sovereign countries that agreed on a policy, contrary to Canada,