

Supply

you in fact fully expect to carry out? Let us be specific. You accused the Liberal mover of the motion of being a little vacuous in his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please.

Ms. Copps: I would like to ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. Would the Hon. Member please address the Chair?

Ms. Copps: I have addressed the Chair, Mr. Speaker. I think if you review my comments I have addressed them to the Chair.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Copps: Could the Minister specify here in the House which of the promises he fully intends to break and which of the promises he intended to break even before he made them on September 4?

Mr. Mazankowski: I am very pleased to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. I thought I made it very clear that we intended to fulfil all the election commitments that we made in the area of transportation—

Mr. Skelly: VIA rail cuts?

Mr. Mazankowski:—consistent with the comments made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in his statement on November 8.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address two questions to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) in light of the VIA rail cuts. On Vancouver Island the E and N Railroad for years has been trying to get an upgrading and an improvement in the service on that particular railroad. There has been a substantial reduction in bus transportation and the lower end of the highway is not conducive to safe movement of large volumes of goods. Will the Minister indicate what he intends to do for the E and N Railroad?

I would like to suggest to the Minister in terms of cost cutting an improvement in spending. Your subsidy to the coastal ferry system in British Columbia is simply a grant to general revenue in British Columbia. They have destroyed the ferry system on the coast of British Columbia. Would the Minister consider making that grant conditional to service of the small communities up and down the coast of B.C. if we are going to continue to provide a federal subsidy?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, in response to the Hon. Member's part of his question, the issue of the E and N Railway was clearly a subject that will be considered by the rail passenger action force which was established this week. If the Hon. Member had a chance to look at the terms of reference I think he would see that the mandate is to define a basic national railway passenger network. This includes those services to be restored. It is also to review all current services, and among other things, to define and oversee a new rail

passenger investment program with emphasis on the acquisition of new rolling stock. I hope this answers the Hon. Member for Regina West. It should make him very happy because he has harped about it just as long as I have, and I would have thought he would have been my greatest ally in support of the cut-backs. He has said time and time again that the costing formula is too generous for the railroads; it is a waste of money. We are trying to get at that waste.

Mr. Skelly: What about the money you are wasting on the ferry service?

Mr. Mazankowski: I remind Hon. Members that, notwithstanding the \$93 million reduction, there is still \$600 million being pledged by the Canadian taxpayer to VIA Rail, of which some \$200 million plus will be used for capital expenditures. We could have thrown more money at the VIA Rail problem and walked away from it, as the Member has suggested, but we believe it is time to make some fundamental decisions, conduct a thorough examination and try to put VIA Rail on a sound economic footing. We intend as well, to put in place a proper legislative mandate that will ensure that it will continue to work and provide the type of service that will make all Canadians proud. That is what we are really trying to do.

Mr. Skelly: What about the ferry service? Where's the beef?

Mr. Mazankowski: I am sorry that I took a little longer, but knowing the Member's interest in the rail passenger service I thought he would have been interested.

The grants to general revenues is a point very well taken. I cannot make a commitment at this point in time, but suffice to say that we are examining that particular issue. I know of what the Member speaks, and I think he has a very valid point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will allow the next question to the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton). A short question and a short answer please.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I have three very short questions. I know the Minister can answer them very quickly. The first one concerns VIA Rail on the northern run from Prince Rupert to Prince George. As the Minister knows it operates three days a week and it is terribly inconvenient to a lot of the small communities. Is there going to be a change in that regard?

My second question is in terms of the northern transportation agreement. I think the Minister is aware that the B.C. Government has cut the Port Hardy to Prince Rupert run to once every two weeks. The B.C. Government has put a totally inadequate vessel on the Prince Rupert to Port Simpson-Kincolith run. Could the Minister comment on whether or not he is prepared to re-open the agreement which was signed in 1977 by Otto Lang? It is very important that that be renegotiated.

Third in terms of the Prince Rupert elevator, could the Minister comment on the accessibility of grain and boxcars to the old elevator? As I believe the Minister knows, 75 per cent