The Government remains committed to reforming our electoral laws and to making voting easier and more accessible to Canadians consistent with the provisions of the Charter.

AIR SAFETY—PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT—EFFECT OF RECENT GOVERNMENT MEASURES/TESTING OF MEASURES PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, on December 20, 1988, a Boeing 737 and a Boeing 727 were reported at Pearson International Airport to have almost come into collision with each other. On January 10 there were two other incidents of near mid-air collisions happening within three hours of each other. In response to this occurrence, Madam Speaker, the Canadian Aviation Safety Board made two interim recommendations to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) on April 5 which we can refer to as urgent recommendations. In essence, the Board recommended that the northeast arrival and descent area around Pearson Airport be cleaned up and that the vertical spacing between aircraft coming into Pearson be given at least 1,000 feet of clearance from each other.

• (1810)

On April 7, the Minister responded by implementing these two measures at Pearson. At page 571 of *Hansard*, on April 17 I asked the Minister of Transport if he was aware that the provisions implemented on April 7 had created further safety problems at Pearson.

Based on the best information I have and monitored by the effectiveness of these changes, I informed the House and the Minister on that date that these measures have saturated air space east of Pearson and forced en route controllers to stack airplanes as far back as Coe Hill, Ontario, which is 95 miles from Pearson. This has created further havoc for controllers due to the reduction of landing flights from 42 to 32 an hour.

I further informed the Minister that en route controllers had not received any sort of briefing on these measures. In my supplementary question, I further informed the Minister that the rigidity of these measures almost caused another mid-air collision.

Flights into Pearson on Sundays are now being instructed to circle from Ottawa or corkscrew over Coe Hill. What is happening is a flight takes off from Ottawa and corkscrews before it is allowed to land in Toronto.

This takes peak hour congestion away from Pearson but transfers the problem to the air space between Ottawa and Toronto. With a current shortage of 74 air traffic controllers at Pearson, it is not difficult to see that logically this involves a safety problem.

In light of this information, I asked the Minister to take appropriate action to ensure the safety of Canadians, yet the Minister failed to address this urgent matter. No action has been taken to date and that is why I am here before you, Mr. Speaker, to address this issue once again.

In his response, the Minister suggested that the measures implemented were proposed by the Canadian Aviation Safety Board after the near miss in Toronto in November. This makes me question whether the Minister read the Canadian Aviation Safety Board Report. It clearly states that there was a near miss in December 1988 and two near misses in January, not in November.

In further response to my question, the Minister stated: "We have talked about safety in the Canadian skies for the last two or three weeks, perhaps longer. I hope he is not now telling me today"—referring to me—"that because there are more delays in Toronto, we should decrease safety in Canadian skies."

My question clearly did not ask the Minister to respond to the increase in delays. I specifically asked the Minister to address the air safety problems being created by the measures he introduced. If the measures did nothing more than create further delays, I would not have asked the question that day.

To my supplementary question, the Minister responded that it is absolutely normal that at the beginning it could create some problems for the controllers. What we did was necessary for Canadian air safety.

I found it interesting that the Minister would admit that there may be some problems for the air traffic controllers. For how long, if at all, can we tolerate such problems before they pose and create a safety risk?