

*Adjournment Debate*

process of getting out and driving to their destination. City to city, downtown to downtown rail is economical and feasible. The Government of Canada has a responsibility because in addition to the economics and the speed and service, there is the environmental question as well. There is no question that high speed electric rail is extremely more environmentally friendly than air is today or will be in the next 20 or 30 years.

• (1825)

I suggest that the answer that the minister gave me, that the Government of Canada could not afford to participate, was wrong. We cannot afford not to participate.

We are spending billions of dollars on air. If we spent the same billions of dollars on rail, we would be able to move more people faster, safer and with much less an impact on the environment. I will wait with interest to hear the response from the government to find out the elaboration of its refusal to once again participate in something that is environmentally logical and financially sound.

**Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his long-standing interest in transportation. I also appreciate his interest in the corridor because that is the area where I come from and it is an issue that we should be talking about.

The government is aware of the arguments that have been put forward in favour of the development of a high speed rail service in the corridor. However, the federal finances available for rail passenger services are fully committed at this point in time to the network that has been established for VIA Rail, an argument we have gone through recently.

The current climate of fiscal restraint necessarily limits the federal interest in proposed high speed rail projects only to the extent of not having adequate resources. We are interested in a privately and commercially financed and viable venture.

As the hon. Minister of Transport has assured the House, he is willing of course to consider all proposals for a transfer of any rail passenger service to third parties, as well as proposals concerning new technology that the hon. member is interested in.

VIA has been asked to pursue all such opportunities and report to the government on a case by case basis. The high speed train proposal being advanced by Bombardier is precisely the kind of initiative that the government had hoped would take place in the private sector. The government encourages those kinds of efforts.

The royal commission that has been set up is examining the role of all inter-city passenger transportation modes in the 21st century. The potential of the high speed rail will undoubtedly, as the hon. member probably knows, be part of that examination.

As I have mentioned we are willing to consider any proposal Bombardier may wish to put forward. However, the government is not in a position, at this point in time, to make a commitment as to its participation in such a project. But we are very interested in seeing the proposals when they come forward and we thank him for his interest.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. This House therefore stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.