

Transportation Policies

in excess of \$25 billion. However, the \$5 billion required to put a mass rapid transit system in place in our Canadian cities would be a break-even cost even if we did not sell a nickel's worth offshore. It makes good sense that we talk about a mass rapid transit system for Canada because of the potential of the industrial development in the exporting of our technology, know-how, and the kinds of jobs it could mean for years to come.

Third, it makes good sense to look at transportation in the cities because of the effect it can have on the affordability of homes. Other members have pointed out that one cannot take a job if one cannot get from where he lives to where he works. If the cost of a gallon of gasoline goes to \$2 or \$3 in the future, then with the high cost of housing it will be almost impossible for Canadians to own a home on the periphery of a city and drive some distance to their jobs. Even if they can buy a home, they will not be able to afford to drive to and from work. A mass rapid transit system would fill that need.

Fourth, if 90 per cent of all Canadians are going to live within our urban centres, we have to look at the quality of life ten, 15 or 20 years down the road. To a large degree the quality of life is contingent on the mobility that one has within a city. Can you get to the arena, the schools, downtown shopping, to a job, to the recreational facilities, to your friends across town, the zoo or the museums? If you are immobile, your quality of life is substantially less. Unless we have a modern transit system, that quality of life will suffer.

It is unfortunate that every city in Canada today is in debt as the result of its transit system. Not only do they have a capital debt, but they are unable to pay the interest. Every transit system in Canada that I know of is in the red.

I will use my city of Winnipeg as an example. Every year that city has a \$1 million capital cost simply to replace buses. Every year it has an operational deficit of \$19 million. The trend is away from our transit systems because they are awkward and cumbersome. In 1962, 44 per cent of those travelling in Winnipeg used the transit system. In 1971, our latest statistics—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, for the second time in as many days, we are discussing a motion dealing with the government transportation policy. In both cases, Mr. Speaker, the motion was introduced by a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. I wonder whether it is because the Tories have realized that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is now experiencing difficulties and, like vultures, they are trying to snatch the prey for themselves

while he is in deep trouble, but that would not be gentlemanly behaviour. On the other hand, with heavenly inspiration, perhaps they have discovered that transportation is now facing some problems and they have decided to move two motions in a row to make up for their past neglect of the matter.

Whatever it may be, Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that the transportation policy of this government should be inadequate and fail to meet the needs and requirements of our vast country. The government cannot deny the fact, for it acknowledged it when it introduced Bill C-33 entitled:

An Act to amend the National Transportation Act and the Department of Transport Act for the purpose of defining the objective of the transportation policy for Canada and authorizing the consequential rearrangement of powers and duties relating to transport and to amend the Transport Act and the Railway Act in respect of freight rates and other matters.

And today, the motion which is being debated reads as follows, and I quote:

That, in the opinion of this House, the transportation policies of this government have failed to meet the needs of urban and rural Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Villeneuve, a riding in northwestern Quebec, which is far from large centres, I can certainly speak about the crucial importance of establishing a consistent transportation policy which would take the particular needs of remote areas into consideration. I would like to deal a few moments with the importance of having a coherent transportation policy in remote areas such as the area I have the honour to represent. Mr. Speaker, for some towns such as Val-d'Or, Chibougamau, Senneterre and Malartic, an efficient transportation system is a prerequisite to their development and to the survival of their people. It is absolutely necessary to improve the transportation system between northwestern Quebec and the large centres if this northwestern area is to pursue its development and if the area I represent is to continue its industrialization.

On several occasions last year, I have had the opportunity to be the spokesman for my fellow-countrymen with regard to problems of delayed freight transport between Montreal, Val-d'Or and Senneterre. I was then receiving a number of letters from merchants, manufacturers, businessmen, chambers of commerce and especially municipal councils. They were all bitterly complaining—and rightly so—about delays of several weeks between the time an item was put into the hands of the railways and the moment it arrived at its destination. It is clear that the economic life of northwest Quebec suffered many hardships.

It is regrettable that Bill C-33 does not deal with this important problem of exceedingly long delays between the moment an article is handed to the railway and the moment it arrives for delivery. The proposed legislation bears heavily on problems brought about by the rates levied by railway companies. The cost for transporting freight by railway certainly deserves our attention and I understand very well that the Canadian Transport Commission must see that shippers of freight pay reasonable rates.

Mr. Speaker, this is all the more necessary since there is no real competition in that area. If we want to prevent overly