

article appearing in today's Toronto *Globe and Mail*, dealing with a report that the Ontario Transport Minister, the Honourable James Snow, has accused the federal government of discriminating against Ontario in its policies with regard to aid to urban transit.

When asked in the Commons today about the \$290 million commitment that was made to urban transit by the party of the government—I believe in the 1974 election campaign—almost none of which has been delivered, the Minister of Transport said that the government may have been overly enthusiastic in making commitments of that sort, without giving any answer to the question.

While we are unaccustomed to this sort of frankness from Liberal ministers, can the Leader of the Government provide us now with details as to when these specific commitments will be honoured, or if there have been other commitments made during periods of high enthusiasm which we can expect will not be fulfilled as well.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I would like to defer to our distinguished colleague, Senator Olson, who has some information on that point.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I am informed, of course, that there were some questions raised in the other house earlier today, but I understand that under the arrangements of the Urban Transport Assistance Program, although the federal government allocates funds, it is the responsibility of the provincial governments to determine which programs or projects will benefit from these moneys.

In the case of Ontario, apparently most of their funds went towards grade separations. As I understand it the actual allocation of funds is based on a formula of \$10 per capita. This allocation formula was agreed to on consultation with the provinces, which felt that a per capita basis was the only feasible way of assigning the money. It is obvious that this agreement takes into account the greater needs of more populous areas for funds, for both urban transportation and grade separations.

Senator Perrault: Call Mr. Davis on that.

ITALY

EARTHQUAKE DISASTER—GOVERNMENT AID

Hon. Peter Bosa: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I am sure that honourable senators have heard about the devastating earthquake in southern Italy yesterday, an earthquake that claimed thousands of victims. A fund-raising committee has been established in Toronto under the auspices of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, and committees will be established in other parts of Canada.

Has the government leader any indication to give us of whether any Canadian aid will be despatched to the earth-

[Senator Nurgitz.]

quake area similar to the aid that was despatched to the Friuli region in 1976, when a similar earthquake took place there?

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Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the reports from Italy are most tragic. The formal information I received this morning from the Office of the Secretary of State for External Affairs is that Italy has not yet appealed for international support. However, should an international appeal be launched, without question Canada would consider a response to the appeal. Canadian generosity and compassion in the aftermath of human tragedy has been demonstrated many times, including the occasion of the Friuli disaster.

In the present tragic circumstances, the government encourages concerned Canadians to contact the Canadian Red Cross Society, which has been asked to co-ordinate contributions to the stricken area. Donations in cash are encouraged, as they allow local relief workers to respond quickly with supplies which meet local needs more adequately and effectively than gifts in kind.

I understand that this afternoon a further personal statement was made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan. Hopefully, a copy of that statement can be obtained at some point this evening, or in time for tomorrow's Question Period. At that time I hope to provide further information regarding Canadian aid to alleviate that terrible and devastating disaster.

Senator Bosa: Will the government leader undertake to make representations to the government that if any relief in the way of cash is going to be made to the earthquake victims, it be made through the National Congress of Italian Canadians, who did such an outstanding job after the Friuli earthquake in building shelters for the earthquake victims, rather than just providing temporary relief, which is provided quite capably by the Italian government?

Senator Perrault: The Honourable Senator Bosa has a long history of expertise and concern in this area. He has been most helpful in the past in advancing constructive proposals affecting refugee relief in various part of the world, not the least of which have been the human problems arising from the unfortunate earthquake in Italy.

The suggestion he has made this evening will certainly be communicated to the government. May I invite Senator Bosa to share with the government other ideas that he might have on this important subject?

PACIFIC RIM TRADE CONFERENCE

REPORT BY GOVERNMENT LEADER

Hon. Orville H. Phillips: Honourable senators, last week we missed the cheerful replies of the Honourable Leader of the Government, who was absent at a conference in British Columbia, a conference which I believe is commonly termed the Pacific Rim Conference. It was a rather unusual conference, in that it was held behind locked doors. I want to assure