

*Oral Questions*

funded out of this program in Nova Scotia. Are you in favour of those or are you against those too?

**Mr. Kaplan:** It sounds as if the Deputy Prime Minister is using a list of projects to cover up those they cannot defend on proper grounds.

## POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister about the defence. A key element in the defence which the Minister of Public Works has given against conflict of interest was the Minister's claim on Wednesday that there was no benefit, but that in fact there was a detrimental effect to adjoining land owned by him from the road paid for out of the government fund for which he is now responsible.

What was it that convinced the Prime Minister that the Minister of Public Works would not benefit from a road built partly on land for which he was paid out of the fund, which provides improved access to vast holdings of the Minister alongside the road, and which is also used by Scott Paper to execute a business deal between the Minister's company and Scott Paper?

• (1140)

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the Hon. Member does not want to leave an impression that I think does not bear to fact. Let us look at that.

Let us look at the widening of the highway. He refers to the Minister and a family member. As I say, the details can come out at the Public Accounts Committee or another time. It was approximately one hectare each, approximately an acre. I think any of us who know anything about highways and the broadening of a highway know that if you take a certain strip of land ten feet or five feet for the broadening, whatever it was, you can very quickly run up a hectare or a half hectare of land.

Let us not characterize this as if there was some great amount of land that through expropriation was sold or that a flip was made in order that the Minister would receive some money. I think the Hon. Member should re-examine how he is phrasing that in order that wrong impressions are not left.

**Mr. Kaplan:** The Minister has obviously missed my point.

## REQUEST FOR INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, how could the Minister argue that he would not be a beneficiary of the widening of that road, considering how much adjacent land he owns? If he was able to, as he said, convince the Prime Minister that he did not benefit from the widening of that road, will the Government agree to an independent inquiry to look into the impact of that widened road, that \$9 million expenditure, on the value of the Minister's adjoining land?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I have given the details as they have been brought to me. I say to the Hon. Member that all of us, and especially cabinet Ministers, operate and function as we should under very strict conflict of interest guidelines.

**Ms. Copps:** Do you observe them?

**Mr. Epp:** Yes, we do observe them. That is not right. I think the Hon. Member should remember that the land in question has been held by that family for a long period of time. There are Members on all sides of this House who I am sure have held property for a long period of time.

I am sure there are provincial projects that have gone past that land. There are federal projects that have affected Members' land.

The point that has to be made is very clear. It was done under the legal expropriation agreement of Nova Scotia. I say to the Hon. Member: "Don't use the argument of vast holdings and somehow leave the impression, when half a hectare is going to be affected, that somehow there was a great benefit to the Hon. Minister".

One generally finds that farmers and landholders do not like to give up land for a public works.

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## TRANSPORTATION

## VIA RAIL SERVICES

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Transport a question. He told the committee on Wednesday that he does not have the VIA Rail business report or business plan and therefore he cannot decide anything. All the rest of us know about the plan, that the future of VIA Rail is on the line, and that the Budget is already being implemented by VIA Rail. One of our offices tried to make reservations after for October 15 in Atlantic Canada and