

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to advise the House that I will hear a single question from the hon. member for Nickel Belt, followed by a single question from the hon. member for London East.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

The cuts announced this morning by the Minister of Transport are directed at the economy of the country in general and of the Montreal area in particular, where half the VIA Rail jobs are located.

Is the Minister able to say exactly how many jobs will be affected in Montreal, both at VIA Rail and in local industry, by which I mean VIA Rail's suppliers—more than a hundred companies?

**Mr. Bouchard (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question from another colleague, saying that the official figures, which you can use because they are reliable, show that 912 jobs will be lost.

But the Hon. Member tells me that we are jeopardizing Montreal's economy. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of this House will be glad to know that over the next five years, given the deficit we inherited from the previous government, these measures will save \$1 billion in government operations alone.

Mr. Speaker, that is what I call enlightened government management.

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Fontana (London East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. In southwestern Ontario where one in five of the travelling public uses VIA Rail, where senior students, working men and women, and business people, need the service, where our highways are already congested and have become death traps, how can this government cut service to southwestern Ontario by more than 60 per cent? How can the minister justify this cold, callous, irresponsible action?

**Mr. Bouchard (Roberval):** I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I am very proud to be able to say that we have maintained almost all services in southwestern Ontario. I believe that is what Canadians want. But at the same time, whether it be southwestern Ontario, Quebec, the maritimes, or any other part of Canada, decisions have to be made with a national perspective and they will continue to be made in that way. When I look at the number of trips which will be made from Toronto to

Windsor, Toronto to Sarnia, Toronto to Niagara Falls, I repeat, I am proud of the decision.

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## POINT OF ORDER

### ANNOUNCEMENTS BY MINISTERS

**Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan):** Mr. Speaker, it is a time-honoured tradition in this House that when ministers of the Crown are announcing major new initiatives and major policies that it be done before this House and not before any other bodies. The Minister of Transport this morning made his announcement at the National Press Theatre instead of in the House of Commons.

Because of the exchange here in the House during Question Period it is clear why the minister should have made his statement here, where we have obvious information, differences of opinion, differences of fact being presented at the same press conference by the president of VIA Rail than were presented by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport today.

I would ask that you review the situation to determine if in fact the privilege of Parliament as a whole has been breached because of this announcement outside the chamber.

**Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point that my hon. friend has made and I will deliver a letter to him as soon as possible indicating, I am sure, that this government has made more use of ministerial statements than any government in the past 10 to 12 years and to demonstrate that we are using the House for that type of thing. Today is Wednesday and my hon. friend knows that this announcement was made with all immediate haste and that—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lewis:** No, as soon as it was taken. The Minister made himself completely available in Question Period, and was here for the entire Question Period. The opposition has had full and ample time to question the minister and we will stand on our record on ministerial statements against any previous government.

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, I think the point been made by the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan is that we knew this announcement was coming down for a week. We had the leaked document which the government denied for one full week, day after day. It was announced that this statement was going to be made Wednesday.