

Unquestionably this is a matter of great urgency to them for which no judicial remedy exists.

MR. CORBETT—VIA RAIL—CUTBACKS IN PASSENGER SERVICE

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, I rise to lay upon the Table a petition signed by some 600 residents of the province of New Brunswick and from across Canada who are adding their names to the over 13,600 names on whose behalf I have laid a petition before this House to decry the cuts in VIA Rail services. They join the thousands of citizens of this nation who nightly fall down on their knees and pray to God that justice in this country will be done and that this government will be stopped from preventing them from joining and being able to visit their relatives and families across this nation by virtue of a decision arbitrarily taken by the government.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1,775, 2,724, 2,994 and 3,025.

[Text]

CMHC EXPENDITURES FOR ADVERTISING

Question No. 1,775—**Mr. Stevens:**

For the current fiscal year, what are the estimated expenditures of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for (a) advertising (b) free or subsidized publications (c) other information conveyed to the public?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): I am advised by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that as of the date this question was asked, the estimated expenditures for the calendar year 1980 are as follows: (a) \$750,400, (b) \$695,200, (c) \$475,500.

COST OF METRIC CONVERSION

Question No. 2,724—**Mr. Beatty:**

What has been the cost of metric conversion to the (a) retailers (b) Canadian taxpayer?

Mr. Ralph Ferguson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): In so far as Metric Commission Canada is concerned, the following response is applicable: (a) The Retail Merchants Association of Canada and the Retail Council of Canada have advised Metric Commission Canada that the cost of metric conversion to retailers to date has been minimal except for retailers involved in the three retail food scale pilot area programs. Otherwise, it has been only necessary to purchase items such as tape measures and/or metre sticks. Some additional minor expenses have been incurred by retailers for staff training, the development

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of supplementary promotional materials and for extra advertising space to accommodate dual measurement units. Such costs are usually too low to justify a separate accounting system.

With respect to scale conversion in the three pilot cities, the cost of converting retail food scales was generally the most significant cost. The average cost of converting scales varied with the type of scale. Modern electronic digital scales have a built-in conversion capability and were usually converted at no charge. For mechanical scales in good condition, the cost varied from \$100 to \$400 per scale depending on the make, model and the type of conversion chosen. Automatic labelling and prepackaging scales are only used in large supermarkets. This type of scale was converted at a cost of \$800 to \$900. Individual retailers have not made detailed cost information available to Metric Commission Canada, but informal estimates based on scale population and the expenses stated above would place the cost, when spread over the population of the pilot areas, at less than \$1 per capita.

The issue concerning the cost of scale conversion in the three pilot cities is complicated by the fact that many retailers chose to purchase modern electronic scales to modernize equipment and increase productivity rather than to convert inefficient and/or obsolete mechanical scales. Many scales of this type could no longer compute prices due to the changes in food costs which had increased the price per pound of food products beyond the limits contained on most scale charts. Some retailers may consider the cost of upgrading their scales as a conversion cost because it happened coincidentally. However, such additional cost would have been incurred in any case at some future date to replace obsolescent weighing equipment. It should also be noted that special federal tax and import duty concessions are in effect to lighten the cost of metric conversion of retail scales for retailers.

Offsetting the cost of new scales for those retailers who have chosen to purchase them have been the many benefits accruing to them due to scales which are significantly more productive, more accurate and result in less down time for repairs. No studies have been carried out to determine the offsetting value of these benefits but some retailers say the costs of modern electronic scales are recovered in less than a year.

(b) The cost to the Canadian taxpayer of operating Metric Commission Canada from 1971 to March 31, 1981, was \$37,084,990. In addition, contributions under the workers' metric tools assistance program for the same period were \$5,858,597.

With respect to the costs incurred by business and industry, the Canadian government's policy is that the cost of conversion is borne by those converting in the majority of economic sectors. Each company and organization which has implemented metric conversion has been guided by their appreciation of their own short and long-term interests. Each sector and unit of the economy has been invited to identify the opportunities for change and to bear its own costs, just as it has or will reap the benefits arising from the change. The costs of conversion are one time costs whereas the resulting benefits continue with