

believes that modernization and innovation in railway passenger carriage is one of the keys to future success, it would not wish to see substantial funds diverted from much needed and heavily used rail passenger services.

9. The Committee further recommends that prior to the acquisition of any railway stations and associated facilities, or prior to the signing of any firm contractual commitment to purchase such properties by VIA, the terms and conditions of the acquisition, including the purchase price, be examined by independent auditors and evaluators in accordance with current accounting principles, and that their findings be presented for parliamentary scrutiny and discussion.

(v) Comparative Analysis of other National Railway Systems

In the course of testimony and proceedings before this Committee, there have been numerous references, comparisons and allusions to the experience of other countries with passenger rail services. Detailed information was presented by various witnesses as to the amount of government subsidies provided to railway passenger transport in a number of European countries and especially to the Amtrak system in the United States. Considerable discussion in the course of the proceedings was centered around new technology in railway passenger trains now available in England, France and Japan.

The Canadian passenger rail system does not operate in a vacuum and taking advantage of information as to technological, organizational and financial structuring of foreign railway systems, must certainly not be overlooked. It can indeed be a profitable experience for foreign analogies to be examined in sufficient detail. On the other hand, superficial comparisons with the Canadian experience are to be avoided. In every country, and this is certainly true in Canada, historical, sociological and geographical factors are most important. In the Canadian case, this particularly includes climatic factors. As well, government structuring and indeed political orientation will have profound effects upon the development of any particular transportation system. Therefore, while direct comparisons can be instructive, caution must be exercised in view of the differences in various national settings.

In almost every instance, these comparisons with foreign countries revealed an apparently higher incidence of government and private sector investment in railway passenger services and the implementation of costly, but effective advanced railway passenger technology. The Committee certainly feels that further study is merited, but cautions against wholesale importation of foreign experiences which may not be entirely applicable to Canada.

For this reason, the Committee refers back to its first recommendation regarding the establishment of a joint parliamentary committee which would be charged with studying, over a period of time, all aspects of passenger transportation policy in this country. Such a study would be deficient if it did not include an analysis of passenger transport systems in other countries. This should include discussions with foreign transportation administrators and technologists concerning their countries' experience with various aspects of administration and development of their passenger transportation systems.