

*Aeronautics Act*

I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to read that letter into the record. If hon. members have an opportunity to reread it tomorrow, they will see that many of the points contained in the letter are valid and should be considered. We want this bill referred to a committee. We want witnesses called to deal with the areas of concern about which many members have spoken. Those in the aviation industry who wish to present briefs and make representations should be permitted to appear before the committee.

I understand that difficulties have been experienced with four air carriers with regard to the collection of fees for services. The minister's solution to this seems to be to require all pilots and owners of aircraft to fall under the umbrella of these charges even though the difficulty was only experienced with four air carriers. That is most regrettable. It is a further example of overkill and will have an extremely detrimental effect on aviation in Canada.

There are other members who wish to speak on this bill and bring forward other points of interest. I will yield the floor to them at this time. I just want to state that when this matter comes before the committee, as I am sure it will, we will be adamant with regard to having witnesses and briefs presented from those in the aviation industry who will be affected by this bill. We will endeavour to amend it and change it in such a way that it will not be detrimental to the Canadian aviation industry. If left in its present form, I am afraid it will have a rough passage.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on second reading of Bill C-40, a bill which gives to the minister and his officials much greater powers to improve regional air services, such as Montreal-Mirabel, but I must say that very few clauses in this bill promote the establishment of airports in remote areas like the Gaspé peninsula, northern Ontario and Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments contained in this bill give much more power to the minister and his officials to give a negative answer to realistic projects that may come from some municipalities. The current situation of runways in the Gaspé peninsula does not allow for an adequate service. The length of runways and the lack of sufficient navigation aids result in many delays and flight cancellations in Gaspé and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts as well. The regional air carrier for Gaspé, Quebecair, had to cancel 12 per cent of its flights in 1976 because of bad weather conditions.

Since 1974, Department of Transport officials and even ministers have been stating that the federal government will provide for the financing of the 6,000-foot extension of the runway in Gaspé and that this runway will be provided with facilities and with better navigational aids. In 1977, the same officials of the Department of Transport say that according to the existing regulations, the present site does not meet the security standards for navigation and that after having invested \$1.5 million for building an airport and an air terminal we should try to find another site.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Department of Transport is perhaps the only one among all departments here in Ottawa which is so independent that it can see to its own operations without consulting people or experts from outside. The department submits regulations, has them passed by Parliament, applies these regulations and no independent body has in any way the right to interfere in their files. In one word, as the scouts said before, this department is taboo.

The Chamber of Commerce of Gaspé, in a brief presented on April 1977, states this, and I shall quote a few parts from it:

Following the representations which have been made for the last six years for a 6,000-foot extension to the runway in Gaspé airport, it appears to us necessary to inform the Minister of Transport of the results of some research and to formulate once again our requests.

We will give you first some data on the previous studies on the establishment of an airport in Gaspé. We will then give you the results of the test flights which have been made to check the conditions of air navigation in the immediate vicinity of the present runway. Finally we will formulate our requests for the immediate future.

In its previous studies, the Gaspé Chamber of Commerce states that the plans were accepted in 1952. Other plans were also developed and signed by the department; the land survey took place in 1965. Moreover, an expropriation plan and a development plan were set up in 1965 and 1969 respectively.

The brief states further:

What is to be inferred from these works?

We cannot resign ourselves to admitting that federal Department of Transport engineers approved these development and construction plans for an airport without making use of the proper site.

If such were the case, the people of the Gaspé area should not be penalized because of these actions.

The land surveys, as well as the development, expropriation and construction plans to which we have referred indicate that the current site of the landing strip, without being ideal, is quite adequate and improvable.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk for hours about our air services in Gaspé, but I find it rather disappointing, and the population too, to see all those conflicting reports which have been submitted for 10 years, and while the competence of department officials cannot be questioned, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that before making a consistent decision on all those files the minister should seek advice and ask for some assessments by independent consultants.

Gaspé is over 500 miles away from large centres like Montreal, and we have been waiting for years for the federal government to take action and give a better service to our people. How is it possible that people still trust a department which has been submitting conflicting reports for 10 years now? I feel it is incumbent on the minister, with the powers he will derive from this new bill, Bill C-40 now under study, that from time to time he seek consultants' advice to assess whether regulations or regulations enforcement are consistent with reality. We doubt whether some officials could have been overzealous to the point that they have shelved certain projects which our people had called for many years. On this, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude.