

Oral Questions

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I can say as a member of Parliament from Quebec who has been in British Columbia three times this summer that you are fully welcome in Canada, indeed.

I would also like to say that in British Columbia we have maintained the services that we can afford in the national perspective.

My colleague will understand that between Jasper and Prince Rupert the cost for every passenger who uses the train is \$483 which is paid for by the Government of Canada and Canadian taxpayers and we continue to pay this amount of money. I believe that we have treated British Columbia as any other province of this country.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and it relates to the credibility of this government.

In 1985 the government said to Atlantic Canadians: "Use it or lose it" with regard to VIA. Today thousands more Atlantic Canadians use the rail system.

Earlier today another member asked whether or not the Halifax maintenance yard would be closed. The Prime Minister said that that is not true. The document that was passed out today states that the Halifax maintenance centre will be closed. That is it.

When are you going to tell the truth to the people of Canada?

• (1500)

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval) Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that the Halifax maintenance centre will be kept open, and the Prime Minister is right. I believe though that there is still some work to do at the Halifax maintenance centre.

I answer as the Minister of Transport to the House of Commons. I answer to the House of Commons once again that the Halifax maintenance centre will be kept open, and I will hold all necessary discussions with the president of the VIA Rail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Transport. Instead of 14 westbound trains leaving Winnipeg each week, there will now be only three. The Rocky

Mountaineer which the minister himself admits is one of the most popular rides across Canada will be reduced to one trip a week for five months of the year. Considering that tourism is the fastest growing industry in the west, these cuts are a severe blow. How can this government claim it wants regional economies to diversify and prosper when they are dismantling the national transportation system?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I have heard this particular comment on tourism several times.

First of all, I think it is somewhat premature to assume tourists will stop travelling altogether, just because we have closed a certain number of lines. After all, other means of transportation are available to tourists.

Second, as I said earlier, the Government intends to promote any initiatives that will encourage Canadians and tourists in general to use various means of transportation.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, in northern Ontario in the past two days the actions of this government have caused the pull-out of Air Canada's service to North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins and parts of northern Quebec. Now the government has cut out VIA service by the loss of "The Canadian" route and also the removal of the Toronto to Kapuskasing run.

My question is for the Minister of Transport. Why is the Minister of Transport trying to make it really impossible for the people and businesses of northern Ontario to exist and at the same time compete at the same level as the large southern urban areas?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I believe that northern Ontario, northern Quebec, or any other part of the country, has been considered in the national perspective and within the capacity we have to pay for the services we have. The decision has been made in that perspective. That is why we kept services in many parts of the country. Once again, I will repeat again, we will pay for the service that we can afford, but we cannot afford any more, to put \$641 million in a transportation system which carries 3 per cent of Canadians.