

Supply

I therefore conclude by saying this does not make sense. Finally, I hope the Canadian Government will listen to reason and accept this moratorium.

• (1420)

Mrs. Maheu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Papineau—Saint-Michel (Mr. Ouellet) for his remarks. You did make passing reference to remote regions. I know the government has a Member who is facing problems in Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I followed the committee proceedings on the future of VIA here in the House. I would like to hear your comments on the problems facing communities in the riding of Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, for example.

Mr. Ouellet: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, a number of our Conservative colleagues on the other side feel bad and are embarrassed over the decisions made by their government.

I have here a list of Chambers of Commerce, towns and communities that have signed a petition and passed a municipal council resolution urging the Conservative government to agree to this one-year moratorium. It has become obvious—Earlier I saw the Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Langlois) seek the floor to ask questions. The Chamber of Commerce of Chibougamau passed a resolution to that effect. The Chamber of Commerce of Sept-Îles passed a resolution to that effect. I see that my colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup (Mr. Plourde) is in the House. I remind him that the town of Rivière-du-Loup passed a resolution to that effect, as did the town of La Pocatière.

In answer to your question, it has become obvious that the Hon. Member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Gray) would rather hide in the sand pit, because nearly all municipalities in his riding signed that petition and passed resolutions asking him to put pressure on the Minister of Transport about the moratorium. Unfortunately I have to admit that neither the Hon. Member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine nor the Hon. Member for Gaspé (Mr. Marin) or the Hon. Member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup seem to hold any sway over the Minister of Transport who struck a heavy blow against the province's economy when he made that decision which most Quebecers find totally unacceptable.

Mr. Plourde: Mr. Speaker, I just cannot let my colleague say all sorts of things without responding. I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, I use the train which runs through Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and I can also tell the other colleague opposite that there are no trains on the Magdalen Islands.

However, as for the moratorium that was requested, I say publicly that I am not for it. My colleague opposite who just spoke probably never worked in private enterprise. I was in private business for 28 years and I can tell you that when a private company has monetary problems, it has to make cuts. The Government of Canada, which is a very big business, must ensure that these cuts also apply to VIA Rail.

I would also like to tell this House, Mr. Speaker, that as far as eastern Quebec and the Gaspé peninsula are concerned, there are still three trains a week between Gaspé and Montreal and another three trains a week between Halifax and Montreal. That is six days out of seven. And I must tell you this: there was a train called the "Saint-Laurent" from Mont-Joli to Charny. I took that train six months a year. I would like to see Hon. Members get on that train in Rivière-du-Loup at 9.30 in the morning and arrive in Charny to transfer to the Montreal train and be told that the train from Quebec City to Montreal had already passed and could not wait for them because they were late. From there, you had to take a bus, paid by VIA Rail, for the rest of the trip from Charny to Montreal. Sometimes in my experience, the bus driver did not even know where the station was in some places. So I think it is stretching the point to say that VIA Rail has now cut its services, when we know very well that eastern Quebec and the area I represent in this House will continue to be served six days a week. I hope that people will have got the message and will take the train. Although the *Saint-Laurent* from Mont-Joli to Charny has been abolished, 38,000 passengers took it in 1988.

And I would like to tell my colleague opposite that of those 38,000 passengers, 18,000 had railway passes and traveled for free. This train covered 19 per cent of its costs in 1988, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again I tell you that eastern Quebec will be very well served with the VIA Rail schedule that will take effect in January and I ask train users to continue to