

When the mayors from the corridor were here appearing before the transport committee I think they said it best. Talking about Windsor to Toronto, to Ottawa, to Montreal, to Quebec City, they said: "Imagine if instead of a business person going from downtown Toronto through the traffic, rushing to get to the airport so that he can wait in line for his ticket and then for security, and waiting because of flight delays, he could take a high speed electrified train from downtown Toronto, be in Ottawa in the same amount of time, or even less perhaps, but in a much more sane and less frustrated environment".

Other countries have invested in their future. We are turning ourselves back in time. We are cutting 50 per cent of the service. We are decimating Atlantic Canada. We are destroying the tourist trade in western Canada. We have eliminated, for all intents and purposes, a transcontinental system. Nobody can tell me that three times a week on the northern line is a transcontinental service, particularly if that train is going to be stopping at every flag stop on the way. They will never be able to keep up the schedule and ridership will decline even more.

Once again VIA Rail is designed to fail. Neither this government nor the last one believed in rail passenger services. They talk a good line. The Minister of Transport says that he is doing this to save VIA Rail. Give me a break. That is like cutting off your legs and two arms to save your body. There is not much left. Eventually you wither and die.

This government is doing something extremely wrong to this country. There is no question about it. In responding to a question I put to him today the Prime Minister rejected the transport committee report which only called for some time to allow the royal commission, which was appointed after the fact to study the broad issue of passenger transportation, to take a focused look at rail passenger services.

Keep VIA rolling, even with the junk, for the next period of time. Not necessarily a year like has been suggested, because I think it would take a little longer than that, but I would not want to tie them down. It makes sense to give them the time because seven million people cannot be wrong. They choose VIA Rail. They do not want to ride in their cars or somebody else's car.

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They do not want to ride the bus. They cannot afford or do not want to take the plane.

VIA Rail passenger service is a viable option for them. Yes, it is costing the Government of Canada and therefore taxpayers a significant sum of money. There is no question about that. We on this side have argued long and hard over the years that there are ways of reducing it. The main one was through the investment in new capital equipment to lower the operating costs.

Much of that \$5 billion in the last few years has gone to keep that junk rolling. When the temperature in a car is about 95 degrees you have to stop the train so you can crawl underneath the car to turn the valve. That is the problem with the system we have. It was never given a change. It was never given legislation that would allow it to pay only avoidable costs to CN and CP instead of being held ransom by them for a number of years.

Canadians across this country are saying loudly and clearly that they want the government to maintain VIA Rail and to reinvest in VIA Rail. We on this side of the House agree. In closing I would like to move, seconded by the member for Regina—Lumsden:

That immediately following the word "services" the following words be inserted:

— in particular the continuance of service on the following routes at 1989 levels: Regional Services—Halifax—Yarmouth, Halifax—Port Hawkesbury, Halifax—Sydney, Halifax—Moncton—Saint John, Moncton—Campbellton, Moncton—Edmundston, Montreal—Sherbrooke, Quebec—Mont Joli, Toronto—Havelock, Toronto—North Bay, Cochrane—Kapuskasing, Kingston—Toronto, Victoria—Courtenay; Other Services—Montreal—Trois Rivières—Quebec (North Shore), Montreal—Ottawa—Sudbury—Winnipeg—Calgary—Vancouver (The Canadian), Montreal—Toronto, Winnipeg—Capreol.

Mr. Keyes: Madam Speaker, I just cannot let a couple of comments made by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, a fellow member of the transport committee go by, nor some comments made by the member opposite for Fraser Valley East.

First, the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan refers to the government when it was in opposition, screaming and crying about the way VIA Rail, the national passenger rail service in this country, should be. Those members did that when they were in opposition. Members of the Liberal Party of Canada, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, are standing in their place collectively saying that we cannot cut national passenger rail service.