

Bilingual Air Traffic Control

The commission also recommends, as the first stage in implementing bilingual air to ground communications in the Montreal area, that controllers be authorized to communicate in both official languages with VFR flights passing through the Mirabel control zone on their way to other destinations. This will mean a considerable saving in fuel and flight time, eliminating the need to fly around the control zone. We plan to implement this recommendation by October 1. Thirdly, the commission recommends that bilingual air to ground communications be provided to VFR flights entering what is known as the Montreal terminal radar service area, which overlays the Mirabel, Dorval, St. Hubert and part of the St. Jean control zones, up to altitudes of 9,500 feet.

We expect to introduce bilingual air traffic services in this area by January 1, 1978, when the additional controllers required to provide the service will have completed their training.

[*Translation*]

I would like to congratulate the commission on the work that it is doing, and on its continuing efforts to ensure that concerns for air safety are thoroughly investigated and that appropriate action or precautions are taken. In addition to safety concerns which have always been the government's main consideration, I am also pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that the commission concludes that these recommendations will not significantly increase costs. The commission has upheld the view of this government that it is possible to ensure that air traffic control services are provided in both official languages in the province of Quebec without jeopardizing air safety. This is in keeping with the government's policy and objectives for bilingualism.

I am confident that this interim report and government action arising from it will be satisfactory to all concerned. The co-operation we have received from Canadian aviation groups and associations on this whole matter has been most useful and greatly appreciated.

[*English*]

As a result of the recommendations tabled here today, and of the government's intention to act upon them promptly, we have taken another important step toward removing a serious, divisive factor which has extended far beyond the field of aviation and has threatened national unity. I am, therefore, confident that these recommendations by the commission will receive the full support of all members of this House. I should add, Mr. Speaker, that consultations with interested organizations concerning the report began this morning, and should some of them wish to make a formal statement for the attention of the House I will be pleased to table it, for the record, at some future time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) for his French. I see here further evidence of the efficiency of the bilingualism policy in Saskatoon, as well as in High River, Alberta.

[Mr. Lang.]

[*English*]

Sir, it is now more than a year since this commission of inquiry was established by the government to bail the Minister of Transport out of the confusion and division he had created over this whole question. Now, after 12 months of detailed deliberations by the commissioners, we have an interim report which, frankly, does not move the situation very far forward. At least I suggest the minister exaggerates when he calls the recommendations of the report "a significant step toward resolving the issue of bilingual air communications".

Mr. Blais: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I am pleased to see the Postmaster General applauding my observation that it is an exaggeration to so describe the report. The recommendation in support of bilingual VFR traffic at St-Hubert simply confirms what, in fact, has been operating practice for much of the private traffic at that airport during recent months. It merely confirms a recommendation made to the then minister of transport in March, 1975, by Project Bilcom, the study carried out at that time by the ministry in co-operation with CALPA and CATCA. The same study, Project Bilcom, also recommended, more than two years ago, in favour of bilingual advisory services. That recommendation, too, has now been confirmed by the commission.

Beyond that, sir, this interim report does not appear to contain much in the way of findings, particularly in respect of the major questions of commercial traffic at Dorval and Mirabel. I say it does not appear to be so because the minister has tabled a complicated, extensive document. I appreciate his courtesy in making it available to us some two hours before its presentation in the House. We may have further comments to make on it later. I made it clear when the commission was established that we in my party would accept the unanimous findings of the three commissioners. We are certainly prepared to support the unanimous recommendations contained in this report.

[*Translation*]

Apart from this, I can only hope that the commission will speed up its subsequent studies on the matters which are still pending, and particularly on the wide problem of communications as far as instrument flight rules are concerned.

I am very conscious of the technicality of several points but I am also aware—as I am sure hon. members on both sides of the House are—of the symbolic importance of all this matter for many Canadians, and therefore of the necessity to solve this problem in a fair and equitable manner as soon as technical conditions permit.

[*English*]

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues I welcome the report and the statement the minister has made. I will not quibble about whether it confirms what we knew in the past. It has already been indicated that this has been a serious and divisive issue in Canadian politics. I am delighted with the conclusions that have been reached by the commission. I am delighted with the