

*Oral Questions**[English]*

## VIA RAIL

**Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, in taking his broad axe to VIA Rail today, the Minister of Transport has applied a strange logic to the future of Canada's tourism industry.

The government is slashing the transcontinental route from 14 to three times a week. The Rocky Mountaineer will run only once a week for four months of the year.

Even without these absurd restrictions VIA cannot meet the tourism demands during Canada's peak tourism season. Tour operators have had to literally turn business away. Yet the message we got today is that if the profitable tourism runs are to be maintained they must be picked up by the private sector. In other words, sell off our only profit-making runs and take a broad axe to the rest.

In doing so this government has finally exposed its hidden agenda to junk its commitment to passenger rail service throughout Canada.

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## SOVIET ARMY CHORUS

**Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you on behalf of all members for once again permitting us the pleasure of receiving at noon today the Soviet Army Chorus and Dance Ensemble under the able conductor Anatoly Maltzev.

Since these brilliant artists last performed here in February, 1987, the warm winds of change have swept their country and the prospect for greater international co-operation and understanding has been greatly enhanced. These artists were among the pioneers of this growing rapprochement. It is encouraging to see them continue in their worthy cause.

*[Translation]*

Your presence and that of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) and many Members from all parties has once again helped to breach the walls of misunderstanding.

I want to thank those who came to greet this group, including the Right Hon. Prime Minister and Mr. Alexei Makalov from the Embassy, who accompanied them.

*[English]*

Mr. Maltsev, thank you and our best wishes to all your group.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

*[English]*

## VIA RAIL

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, a man who in piecemeal fashion is dismantling the infrastructure of our country—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** —a man who today announced the destruction of a national dream.

The Prime Minister told Canadians during the last election that VIA Rail was safe. He never told Canadians during the last election they were about to lose that railway. The Prime Minister said to the people of Canada, "Use it or lose it". Last year 500,000 more Canadians did use it. The Prime Minister has committed political fraud.

I ask him why is it that he did not tell Canadians in the towns and cities across the country that they would lose the service? Why did he not tell the thousands of employees of VIA Rail they were going to lose the service. Why did he not come clean to Canadians during the last election?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I think my right hon. friend would agree that the principal responsibility of the Prime Minister, the government, and the Parliament of Canada is to try and manage the economic affairs of the nation in such a way as to provide greater prosperity, and to render the economy as competitive as we can, while retaining all the fundamental instruments of our sovereignty which allow for even greater prosperity.

During the last election we campaigned on a series of initiatives, fundamental and chief among which was our commitment to make the economy of Canada sound, to make the public finances of Canada sound, and to render the economy more competitive to produce more jobs and greater prosperity for Canadians.