

Oral Questions

tion from the federal-provincial-territorial task force to add long term offenders as a category to the code.

In May the Solicitor General and I will be convening a meeting of constitutional experts and others to look at other strategies we can take within the law to protect society from those who are at high risk of reoffending.

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INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's move toward a knowledge based economy presents tremendous economic and educational opportunities for all Canadians. It is very important that these opportunities are made available to all Canadians, not only those in urban areas but those in rural and remote areas as well.

Could the secretary of state tell the House what steps the government is taking to ensure that Canadians in rural and remote areas will have access to the opportunities afforded by the information highway?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as member for the rural riding of Portage—Interlake I share the hon. member's concern for rural areas and thank him for his question.

The government is working very hard through programs like SchoolNet, the community access centres and the senior centre information project to ensure the information highway gets out to all areas of Canada and that rural Canadians can benefit equally with urban Canadians.

The community access centres program is now being piloted. The first official competition will be due in October. We are working hard so that the program will be a success and will enable rural communities to participate. Members of Parliament will be fully briefed on the program before the summer break so they can help their communities in submitting briefs and empower people from one end of the country to the other to participate fully in the information highway.

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[Translation]

AIR CARRIERS

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

The minister is always telling us about the progress he has made in the air transport industry and the satisfaction expressed by the presidents of the two main carriers. In fact, since his international route allocation policy was announced in late December, and because of his decisions systematically favouring Canadian International in the allocation of international

routes, Air Canada shares are taking a beating on the stock market.

My question is this: How can the minister maintain that he acted fairly and equitably, when, according to Standard and Poor, Air Canada has been hurt by the minister's recent decisions giving Canadian International access to the American market, Chicago and New York in particular, without any compensation for Air Canada?

• (1155)

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you can appreciate, the financial situation of any company with publicly traded shares is a very delicate subject matter.

I must, however, tell my hon. colleague that the reason why I say that we have acted as equitably as possible in this whole matter is that, after years of controversy and difficulties in the Canadian air transport industry, the directors of both carriers are telling us and stating publicly that we have acted fairly and efficiently.

My hon. colleague should know, for example, that Air Canada decided the day before yesterday to proceed with a \$500 million share issue and that, throughout this process, Air Canada notified Canadians that it had to purchase new planes and hire over 600 people. I think that, if we in the House of Commons want to be fair and equitable, we should realize that great progress has been made. The situation is not perfect, but we think that both carriers are about to experience years of growth that will be much more interesting than what we have seen in the past.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister draw a parallel between Hong Kong, a route which Air Canada is ready to start servicing in the summer, thus creating 500 jobs, and Germany, a route which Canadian cannot even start servicing by the end of the year because it does not have enough planes?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very simple how we rationalize the decisions with respect to all our cross border and international air travel.

If I use the thesis put forward by my hon. friend, we would not have attributed all the rights we were able to negotiate with the United States. My hon. friend will know that Air Canada has orders with major aircraft manufacturers both in Canada and outside the country to be able to service the routes we have been able to negotiate internationally and with the United States.

If it were a question of only attributing routes or making it possible for Air Canada and Canadian to fly to areas where they have the aircraft for it, there would be a lot of things we would not do that we have already done.