

*Supply*

informed Mr. Harry Steele that indeed an airport will be closed in western Newfoundland? I have one supplementary question for the minister.

**Mr. Pepin:** Mr. Chairman, this question as to the advisability or otherwise of maintaining the two airports, namely, Stephenville and Deer Lake, is indeed with us. A quite extensive study of this area of Newfoundland will be made to gather all possible facts and figures. A decision has not yet been made. I do not know where the president of Eastern Provincial Airways got this information. I think I have discussed this before with the hon. member. There should be no doubt about our good intentions.

At the same time, this situation is not peculiar to western Newfoundland. There are a number of other cases in Canada where airports are located a relatively short distance from each other. Quite frankly, I must look at this from the point of view of possible savings. I thought I was sufficiently clear on that subject this afternoon, that is to say with regard to the limited resources which are available. I look at it, also, from the point of view of the operations of the regional carrier. I am told that, quite naturally, it costs the carrier more money to keep facilities at two airports. So I want to assure the hon. member that we go into this with the greatest of good intent, and hopefully we shall make the right decision in due course.

● (2010)

**Mr. Tobin:** I have one further comment, Mr. Chairman. When the president of the regional carrier operating in Newfoundland tells a public meeting that a decision has already been made in advance of a review of air service in western Newfoundland, and when at the end of this month the Ministry of Transport proposes to go to western Newfoundland, to Deer Lake, Cornerbrook and Stephenville, the towns concerned; when these people come to public meetings being held by the Ministry of Transport to express their views on air service with the preconceived notion that the ministry has already made its decision, I think we will find in these public meetings a confrontationist kind of atmosphere, with one town presenting its case against the other town, one town suggesting why the airport of the other town should close down.

So it seems to me it would be in the best interests of the Department of Transport—perhaps the minister might endeavour to do this himself—to make a public statement to the people of Newfoundland. I have done it, but I suggest the minister and his departmental officials could do it, that is, make a public statement to the effect that Mr. Steele does not speak on behalf of the Government of Canada, that he does not dictate the policy of the Government of Canada, that the question has not yet been decided, and that those who intend to take part in these hearings should do so from the standpoint that no decision has been made. It is my hope—and I will be attending the hearings—that we could end up with two airports continuing to operate in western Newfoundland. I shall be making this case. Unless the minister clarifies the issue by stating that no decision has yet been made, a situation of conflict is likely to arise where, instead of discussing air

transportation in a rational, objective manner, we are likely to see two towns clawing each other to death, each trying to show why its airport should remain open and the other should close.

**Mr. Pepin:** I want to repeat emphatically that a decision has not been made. The inquiry is to be a proper one, objectively carried out. I would think that the hon. member, who was present during one of the conversations we had involving Mr. St. John, the deputy air administrator, gained the impression that Mr. St. John wanted this to be as objective an exercise as humanly possible. Mr. Steele, however charming and dedicated he is, obviously does not decide what the department should do. Otherwise, a number of decisions would already have been made which would be quite advantageous to EPA. Finally, through the member of Parliament for the area I would invite people to come to these hearings and attach to them all the importance which, in my view, they deserve.

**Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth):** Mr. Chairman, my few comments this evening will be directed to the Minister of Transport who, I trust, will attempt to answer a question of vital importance to my riding, namely, the twice-promised expansion of Mount Hope airport. Even if he cannot offer my constituents some satisfaction, as Minister of Transport, he might offer some sympathy to me as one of his own constituents because I do spend a considerable amount of time in his riding of Ottawa-Carleton. I hope he can offer me and my constituents, as I say, some satisfaction, given the utter confusion that he and his cabinet colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton East, are causing throughout the Hamilton and Niagara area. As my MP the minister is causing me no end of frustration and genuine concern in connection with this long-standing matter of the expansion of Hamilton airport.

My agitation has been compounded by what the Minister of Transport said this afternoon in one of his typical Maurice Chevalier soft-shoe routines. I am quoting from this day's preliminary transcript of *Hansard*—the minister started off by saying, and I might add, looking benignly at me, "Distinguished members of this assembly"—and I thank you for that—"come up with suggestions that the number of airports should increase, that facilities should be built all over the place, that radar should be doubled up, and improved." Then he added, "There are limitations to that." Mr. Chairman, you want to believe it! There are also limitations to the patience of the people I represent and, indeed, to the patience of those in the entire Hamilton-Wentworth region and surrounding areas with this government's stalling, foot-dragging, constant delays, and as the hon. member for Hamilton-West is fond of saying, bamboozling and flim-flamming about what should be done, about how much should be done, and when it should be done at Hamilton civic airport.

Quite frankly, I was further angered this afternoon when the minister, trying not to cry his crocodile tears on the floor of this House, told us "I expect to be chastised occasionally by members of this House for not being sufficiently sympathetic to the little local situations." Well, as one Hamilton M.P. who has duly chastised the minister, without success, I fear—