

Transportation Accident Investigation Board

What is the next step as this Act states? The next step is to prepare a draft report. Where does that draft report go? The Act states that it is a confidential document. It goes directly to the Minister of Transport. Why? Obviously it is so that the Minister of Transport can see that draft report before anyone else sees it. The Act is quite blunt in that it then gives the Minister the opportunity to make representations with respect to it. It is only after the representations have been made and the Board has considered them as they must do under the Act that a final report is made public.

Is that a problem? I suggest that it could very well be a problem because of the need to perceive that such a Board investigating accidents is independent, that it is not under the thumb of any particular Minister. Not only must it be independent, it must be seen to be independent. I have a real difficulty where the Act requires that the draft report be submitted to the Minister for his review and recommendations before it can be made public. The perception might be that if there is a minority report, if there is a report that perhaps could embarrass the Government of the day, that the Minister concerned would have the opportunity to make representations which may be perceived by the public as attempting to influence the final report. If the public is not confident that the Board is independent of the Minister, we are not going to have confidence in the Board and its reports.

It seems that it is designed to breed allegations, to breed questions in Question Period, to breed non-confidence as opposed to confidence.

There is also a potential for conflict in Section 24. In Section 24(2) the Act requires that the Board shall—and of course this is mandatory—“on a confidential basis” send a copy of the draft report to the Minister. It is clear that the draft report is to be confidential. It is clear that it is a mandatory requirement. There is no discretion on the Board. It must do this.

Two sections later, however, in Subsection (4), we see that the Board shall again mandatorily receive the representations made pursuant to Subsection (2). What are they supposed to do with those representations? They are supposed to keep a record of those representations. If you are going to keep a record of representations, one presumes that that record is going to be public. How can you have a public record of representations dealing with a confidential report? Surely the represen-

tations that are going to be kept by the Board dealing with the confidential report are going to be talking about matters in the confidential report.

I find it difficult to follow the rationale there. If we are going to have confidentiality, then we have to remain completely confidential. I suggest that that is not going to build confidence.

The final thing that is going to build confidence is the bottom line. What is the bottom line here? The bottom line is very clear. Whenever a safety board delivers its report, that safety board's report should be listened to. What is the use of this board and that board and the next board delivering all kinds of reports if no one reads them, if no one follows the recommendations contained in them? It is key that we have a commitment to a board whose reports are going to be followed.

• (1520)

We have seen that that has not been the case in the past with the Government. The Canadian Air Safety Board has made specific recommendations with respect to Pearson International Airport, for example. Has the Government listened to those recommendations? No. If we want to have confidence in the new Board that this legislation will create, there must be a commitment by the Government that the report of these boards will be heard and implemented.

With those words, I look forward to the committee work on this Bill. While the spirit is there, the flesh is weak.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Hon. Member deals with safety. There is a situation concerning airport safety that has existed for more than a decade. It involves the federal Government's responsibility for sharing in airport infrastructure.

At Campbell River there is an airport road which is in disastrous condition. The medical association of Campbell River has said it cannot, in many cases, advise patients to use that road for Medivac. Ambulance drivers do not want to use that road. People who work there have raised the problem of road safety many times.

Does the Hon. Member believe that this Board should be able to examine questions of infrastructure when it concerns a serious situation like that of the Campbell River Airport road?