

Oral Questions

This morning, however, I met for two hours with the representatives of air line companies, air line pilots, and air traffic controllers to define ways and means to assess these resources, and I have promised them that, on top of the billions of dollars which the Government has already spent on air safety since 1984, that if as a result of the review carried out by the air industry and the Department of Transport the need to increase the resources was evident, we would certainly increase them. Therefore, as usual, on the basis of the available data, we are acting as a responsible Government.

[English]

HAMILTON AIRPORT—REQUEST THAT TRAFFIC BE
DIVERTED FROM PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Leader of the Official Opposition needs no direction from the Minister of Transport on whether he should be paying attention in the House of Commons or not. How long have we been hearing these promises from the Minister of Transport? Since 1984? It is promises, promises. Where is the vision?

What the travelling public wants is concrete action from the Minister, not temporary, makeshift approaches to air safety.

The question is this. In light of his statement of February 21, 1989, that Hamilton Airport will unavoidably play a part in the decision the Minister would make in relation to the current air traffic problems, will the Minister then order the redirection of some air traffic such as small planes, executive jets, charter aircraft or cargo aircraft, the stuff that is making it so chaotic at Pearson, to Hamilton Airport immediately?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): On March 9, Mr. Speaker, together with my colleague the Minister of State (Transport), I initiated in Toronto an evaluation process of the current air traffic problems not only at the Lester B. Pearson airport, but everywhere over the Toronto air corridor. We have received 62 different briefs. We have met hundreds of persons and received hundreds of recommendations. Some of them deal with Hamilton, others with Buttonville, Oshawa, and Pearson proper. We are in the process of reviewing these recommendations. Concerning the air traffic not

only over Hamilton but also Toronto, I repeat what I said at the time, namely, that decisions will be made without delay on the basis of the air traffic situation as a whole.

[English]

DEREGULATION OF AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. The internal audit branch document is dated June, 1987, the same month that Bill C-18, the Act to deregulate air travel, was passed by this House. That Act was not proclaimed for another four months. The document went to the Deputy Minister. The Deputy Minister or one of his associates asked for a further review. That review came back saying that the document was basically sound.

• (1430)

I want to know why the Government did not put a hold on the proclamation of deregulation of air transportation until such time as it had the resources necessary to ensure it would happen in a safe way.

Second, I want to know, and the people of Canada want to know, what the Government will finally and specifically do to change the approach, to restructure the Department of Transport, so we have a safe air system in this country.

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is not a matter of referring to a document as my colleague suggests. Even more so since he sent me a letter today on this question and he said in a press conference today that he would not raise the issue in the House. Well! Let us just say that it has always been the New Democrats' tactic to associate the deregulation of transport with safety. That has nothing to do with it. Canadians today are glad to have an air traffic system that makes air travel accessible almost everywhere in Canada. The industry has developed considerably and at the same time, we have maintained an excellent level of air safety. Last year, there were 5,600,000 take-offs and landings at Canadian airports with a minimum of accidents. I think that my colleague is really going out on a limb when he says now, despite what even the Liberal Party has said, that Canadian skies are unsafe.