

Adjournment Debate

As part of the government's announcement of a national, affordable and sustainable network, the minister indicated that VIA would continue to provide service to truly isolated communities with no alternative means of transportation.

Back in October when the hon. member raised his question, he said that the communities from Sudbury to Chapleau, White River, Marathon, Nipigon, Thunder Bay, Dryden, Kenora and on to Winnipeg will lose their rail service link along CP's line in northern Ontario. In making that statement, I think he was playing around a little bit with his geography. He knows the area well, far better than I do. But in making his statement, the hon. member has overlooked the fact that VIA's Sudbury-White River service on the CP rail line continues in place under the government's decision.

It may be that the hon. member has overlooked these communities in making his statement. I can assure him that they were not overlooked when the decision was being made about what lines would have to be cut in order to fit within the framework of the money that we wish to expend in the subsidies to VIA Rail.

Similarly, the truly remote communities of the Winnipeg-Capreol portion of CN's line will be covered by operations of VIA's new restructured transcontinental

service. For the communities between White River, Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, my information is that the total population of that particular area is only about 150,000 and not 350,000. We will have to sit down together and go through these numbers.

We also know that these communities are all served by the Trans-Canada Highway and all have high frequency bus service. In conclusion, the choice of routes reflects the government's intention to strike a balance between the transportation needs of Canada and the fiscal realities. The government's decision is not only financially responsible, but it meets the needs for a sustainable, national network.

I can also say in all truthfulness that the decisions were very, very difficult to make when it was decided what would be kept and what would be dropped. There is no way that you can satisfy all of the needs and what people would like to have through the rail passenger service.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.