

Oral Questions

happened. We talk about uncertainty. What is causing uncertainty and question is the innuendo and the character destruction and the smear of the Minister of Finance which is driving down the dollar and driving interest rates up.

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AIR INDIA DISASTER

INVESTIGATION BY CSIS WITHDRAWN

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House at this time today, since June marks the fourth anniversary of the Air India disaster in which over 300 lives were lost, some 270 of whom were Canadians. I was saddened today when I learned that the investigation that was looked into by CSIS was stopped when it was to be reviewed by the Security Intelligence Review Committee set up to review CSIS procedures. Is the Solicitor General aware that the Deputy Solicitor General, the Deputy Justice Minister, the Deputy Attorney General of Canada and the Commissioner for the RCMP requested that this investigation not take place at this time and that the Review committee reluctantly withdrew its intent to investigate through the practices of CSIS?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member mentioned, a criminal investigation is still under way concerning this unfortunate accident that occurred a few years ago.

The SIRC, the CSIS review committee, has decided not to pursue its investigation for the time being, after consulting with the appropriate authorities of the Department of Justice, the Department of the Solicitor General, the Department of the Attorney General and the office of the Commissioner of the RCMP. There were consultations, and a decision was made by the Committee, on its own initiative, to refrain from pursuing its investigation for the time being so as not to interfere with the current criminal investigation, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

TRANSPORT

VIA RAIL ADVERTISED IN GOVERNMENT TOURISM PROMOTION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of

Transport. On March 20 of this year, Tourism Canada launched an \$11 million television advertising campaign aimed at 26 primary markets in the United States. The ads promote Canada as the world next door and picture VIA Rail as a symbol of what Canada has to offer. At the same time, the Government has gutted VIA Rail's funding and has jeopardized its future. How can the Minister justify the hatchet job that the Government has done on VIA Rail when this same Government is spending taxpayers' dollars to promote it as a tourism product?

• (1500)

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the VIA Rail situation, I have many times referred to the new reference levels that we have given to the corporation. A decision has not yet been made by VIA Rail. Of course, the Government cannot afford to allocate more money than it already has. We have said, and we repeat today, that a decision will be made with regard to the new reference levels. Nobody has said yet that the triangle that the Hon. Member is referring to will be closed. I invite my friend to wait for the decision which will be made by VIA Rail.

INCREASE IN VIA RAIL RATES

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is to the same Minister. The Minister in his answer said that no decision has been made. Yet on June 15, VIA Rail rates will be going up by 10 per cent across the board. The last time this Government did that, 700,000 less passengers used the service, obviously part of the plan of the Government. Will this Minister accept his responsibility and direct VIA to suspend those rate increases until such time as their plan has been presented and given due consideration? Will he suspend those rates?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I confirm that I have been advised by VIA Rail that the fares will be increased by June 15. They have done so before today, last year, the year before. They can decrease or increase. It is a Crown corporation and there is no question that I intervene.