

### Oral Questions

#### REQUEST THAT MINISTER MEET PETERBOROUGH REGION MUNICIPAL LEADERS

**Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough):** Would the Minister, in order to satisfy the five ridings in the Peterborough area which have been adversely affected by VIA termination, confer with the heads of those municipalities, since he has not done so yet, in order that they can review with the Minister the possibility of a democratic process, as referred to in this article, being followed in the city and area surrounding Peterborough?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the Hon. Member that I took the initiative to set up that process. The process is being carried on in a wide variety of communities across Canada under the auspices of a special adviser who reports directly to me the opinions, judgments, and assessments, based upon that wide ranging assessment.

If I were to spend all of my time meeting with each community I would not have time to deal with the many other aspects of the Transport Department. I have a special adviser who is performing that duty and who has met with municipal leaders in that area. He is giving me the recommendations, and I will treat them with the same seriousness as I have in every other part of the country.

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### RAILWAYS

#### REQUEST FOR UPGRADING OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT AT LEVEL CROSSINGS

**Hon. John Wise (Elgin):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in the Question Period I supplied the Minister of Transport with a press copy and some other information with regard to a very sad tragedy which occurred in my constituency late Tuesday afternoon. This tragedy was crash between a pick-up truck and a CNR freight train, resulting in the death of a 32 year-old mother and two young boys aged five. As well, three young people, all under the age of 11, are critically injured and are in hospital.

I ask the Minister very seriously if he would consider, if he has not already done so, implementing a program to upgrade the safety features and equipment at all level crossings, particularly the installation of flashers and barriers at all level crossings? Unfortunately, this is not the first accident, and unfortunately will not be the last.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the Hon. Member sending me a note concerning the very tragic event which took place in his area. I would point out to him that we have the Urban Transportation Assistance Program which has been operating for the past five years, under which the federal Government provides direct assistance to the provinces for grade crossing programs. It is up to a province itself to choose the priorities for a federal allocation.

We are presently negotiating a further extension or redevelopment of that program for an added period of time. It is still under discussion. We do not control the actual allocation of the grade crossing programs. We rely upon local and provincial judgment to make that assessment for us. I will be meeting the Hon. James Snow on Friday to undertake other joint measures, and I will bring this to his attention.

I would also like to point out that we did announce today that there will be in the Department of Transport a special office dealing with safety measures, which will be responsible for making an over-all assessment and co-ordinated special investigations where there are particular problems. I will refer that problem directly to that new office that has been established today.

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### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

#### COURT RULING ON FISHERMEN'S ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS—REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

**Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration who is responsible for the Unemployment Insurance Act. The Minister is aware that last year in the Silk case the Supreme Court of Canada found there was discrimination against fishermen in qualifying for unemployment insurance benefits. Amendments to the Act have not served the purpose of the Government or of the fishermen, and a recent Board of Appeals decision in British Columbia shows that the Unemployment Insurance Act, as the regulations pertain to fishermen, is *ultra vires* and discriminatory to fishermen. Is the Minister prepared to introduce amendments to the Act which will allow fishermen to qualify for unemployment insurance on the same basis as any other workers in Canada?

● (1500)

**Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely aware of the details of the legal case to which the Hon. Member has referred. I will certainly look into it to provide myself with more information than I now have. I should say to the Hon. Member that I do not at the present time have plans to introduce the kinds of amendments he is suggesting.

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### PETITIONS

#### MR. FRETZ—PROPOSED CHANGES TO ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES OF RIDING OF ERIE

**Mr. Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table the report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Erie (Mr. Fretz) on Wednesday, January 25, 1984 and finds that the petition meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.