

Adjournment Debate

the word "terminal", and that is the probable forecast for this very important expansion for the southern Ontario air traffic: terminal. At the very least the Minister of Transport is being devilishly clever in playing word games in answers to my questions in the House, and almost certainly the Government of Canada has relegated Hamilton airport expansion to a very low priority on the Richter scale of campaign promises.

I might just remind you, sir, of one specific campaign promise, straight from the horse's mouth—I think it was that part of the anatomy—when the hon. member for Hamilton East last January 25 during the election campaign, told the *Hamilton Spectator* that the \$45 million would result in primitive facilities at best and that the Liberals would stand by their commitment to a \$100 million expansion at Mount Hope.

There is a far more serious aspect to the confusion that the Minister of Transport has tried to sow in connection with campaign promises and commitments. The minister has repeatedly alleged that we, on this side, simply approved in principle a \$45 million expenditure on the airport, that it was never a government-approved funding, and that it was simply an allocation for consultants. I think I can prove with the documents that I have in front of me that this all came from a recommendation from the then minister of transport, the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), which went to the Treasury Board and was subsequently approved by the full cabinet, and that in fact an investment of \$45 million had been allocated for the purposes of developing Hamilton Civic airport. As far as the minister and the Air Administration Act were concerned, and as far as we were concerned as a government, the airport expansion was "go."

There was a government commitment to the program officially announced by the then minister of labour, my colleague the hon. member for Hamilton West, on January 25. The consultants' fees of \$220,000 which the Minister of Transport has mentioned, was the amount for the first stage only of the proposed development, that is, the firm conceptual design.

I want to make one last point in connection with this hold-up, Mr. Speaker. Nordair has been providing Hamilton with an excellent, regular air service for some years. Nordair is not going to sit around forever with existing facilities. The airline has made it clear that it has contingency plans, and now flight routes, to operate from Toronto international airport, which could be implemented at any time. Sooner or later, and on the basis of evidence I have received from very reliable sources which gives me every reason to believe it will be sooner, rather than later, Nordair will bail out of Hamilton. Unless the airline has concrete evidence, an absolute commitment that Hamilton airport facilities will be upgraded and expanded, then I am convinced that two million people in my area will be adversely affected by Nordair leaving Hamilton.

Throughout this whole process I have been kept totally in the picture, both as a reporter and as a member of Parliament for Hamilton-Wentworth. I also kept the former minister of transport physically in the picture by bringing him to Mount Hope. He made his decision. The enlarged airport would not be a Taj Mahal, another Mirabel, but it would become a first-

class regional facility of benefit to the greater Hamilton area. In short, sir, everything was "go" until the election and the arrival of the new Minister of Transport. Now it appears that the government is trying to weasel out of, not only the previous government's, our government's, \$45 million commitment, but also the former Liberal government's \$100 million promise which was reiterated by the hon. member for Hamilton East. Mr. Speaker, the people of Hamilton and I want a clear and definite statement from the ministry of transport on the future size and use of the Hamilton civic airport.

● (2215)

Mr. Robert Bockstael (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, on May 1 the hon. member for Hamilton Wentworth (Mr. Scott) raised the matter of the government's plans for the expansion of the Hamilton airport in a question to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin).

As the Minister of Transport noted in his replies, the previous government had announced approval in principle of a plan for the expansion of this airport at a total estimated cost in the order of \$45 million. Commitments such as this one are now being reviewed by this government to see, as the Minister of Transport so aptly put it, if they make sense. In this context I think it would be useful to provide some background to the current situation and to elaborate on the review to which the minister referred.

There is no doubt that the people of the Hamilton-Niagara-Brantford area require access to convenient and adequate air transportation service, and this government intends to see that this need is met. At the present time most of the people from this area use Toronto international airport with its many flights and same plane connections to numerous destinations. Thus, simply to provide new airport facilities for Hamilton will not necessarily ensure the provision of better service. What is required is to identify the additional service that existing or new carriers may wish or be persuaded to offer, and plan the development of the airport commensurate with the resultant operational requirement.

At the present time the only scheduled carrier servicing the Hamilton airport is Nordair. To obtain an appreciation of what additional services might be offered, inquiries are being made of other air carriers, including Air Canada. Once these inquiries are completed we will have a better understanding of the potential for new or expanded air services and the consequent level of investment.

This government fully recognizes the need to provide convenient and adequate air transportation services for the people of the Hamilton-Niagara-Brantford area. Our review is designed to ensure that what is proposed for the development of the Hamilton airport is consistent with the likely improvement in air transportation services.

The Minister of Transport stated in this House that the review, or assessment, of what is needed—