

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now over.

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had an opportunity to speak in the House with you in the Chair. I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on your appointment, and echo the sentiments of my friend across the way. I wish you well in your lofty position and I know that you will preside over the House in a very dignified fashion.

I want to thank the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) for presenting the motion today. I regret he is not able to be here and I hope his illness is not serious. I think he will be aware that the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) did a very good job in introducing the substance of the motion. It gives us all an opportunity to discuss transportation issues, and I am very grateful to the Opposition for this opportunity.

I believe, and I think my view is shared by many Members of this House, that transportation is indeed the vital link that binds us together as a nation, both socially and economically. For the Opposition to have chosen transportation for their first allotted day I think is a significant gesture, and indicates the importance they place upon transportation as well.

**Mr. Benjamin:** But they have a lot of nerve.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** I must say, though, that I had hoped I would hear something of a substantive nature, some new initiatives. We waited for initiatives for many, many years from those who are now on that side of the House. We did not really hear anything different today. Nor did we hear anything different from the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

**Mr. Benjamin:** You have not done it yet, that is why I have to keep repeating it.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** The Hon. Member for Shefford spent a great deal of time in his speech criticizing us for reviewing and consulting. At the same time the Opposition, every day in the House and outside the House, is harping at us for being too secretive. Well, we are not trying to hide anything. We believe there are some very fundamental decisions to be made. We have to review a number of programs which have been in existence for a number of years and which clearly are not working. We are doing it in an open and consultative way. We do not function as a Government on the basis of issuing edicts from upon high and imposing them upon the Canadian people, such impositions as the savage cuts in VIA Rail passenger service in 1981, the imposition of the National Energy Program, or the methodology used in unilaterally imposing constitutional change on this nation. That really set the nation in a mood of disharmony and bitterness which we are still trying to overcome today. This is a different style of Government and I think that is what the Canadian people voted for. They voted

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for change, a new direction in economic and social policies. They voted for a change in process and for a Government that would listen before it acted. That is precisely what we are trying to do.

**Mr. Lapierre:** How about air safety?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** We do not have to take a back seat to anyone on air safety. It was this Government that commissioned the Dubin Inquiry which laid the groundwork for a safer aviation system in this country. We will continue to carry out the recommendations of that inquiry, and not procrastinate and footdrag as the Liberal Government did after the inquiry completed its report.

As I said earlier, the Hon. Member for Regina West has not revealed anything new. He merely dredged up one of his old speeches, added a few items regarding cuts and made a few comments about the Speech from the Throne. He put a few finishing touches on it, and that was about it. We have heard that speech in the House and committee time and time again. Basically his solution is to throw more money at the problem and then turn and walk away. With respect, and I have a lot of respect for my hon. friend, we cannot continue along that same path. When people voted for change on September 4 they voted for genuine change, and we are trying to carry out that mandate.

The substance of this motion is silly, Mr. Speaker. To suggest that we should carry out our election promises within two months is absolutely absurd. Especially so when it is sponsored by the Official Opposition, particularly the Hon. Member for Papineau who spent most of his time as a member of a Cabinet and a Government which broke more promises, imposed more hidden agendas and misled the Canadian people on more occasions than any other Government since Confederation.

**Mr. Keeper:** You are neck and neck on that one.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Well, give me a little time. We have only been in office for two months. We are committed to fulfilling our pledges and obligations.

I have to genuinely question the sincerity of this motion, particularly when it was backed up with the kind of hollow, shallow commentary we received from the Hon. Member for Shefford. He talked about savage cuts. Well, it is very interesting to note that the Liberals were going to cut rather significantly the budget of Transport Canada. When the then Prime Minister, now the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) was looking for ways and means to fund his \$307 million election promises, he said that \$76 million was going to come from Transport Canada, most of it from VIA Rail. That was part of their hidden agenda as well. It was exposed but we do not hear them talk about it too much any more.

Transport Canada spends roughly \$4.3 billion a year and takes in a little over \$1.1 billion. That is a \$3.2 billion expenditure not covered by revenue. There has been, roughly, a \$200 million cut in the expenditures of Transport Canada.