

Oral Questions

[English]

RAILWAYS**THE NEWFOUNDLAND RAILWAY—ANNOUNCEMENT OF
FEDERAL FUNDING**

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Yesterday in St. John's, Newfoundland, the Minister announced a decision on behalf of the federal Government that will ensure that Newfoundland will continue to have a dilapidated railway system and a second-class highway system. Despite earlier assurances to resolve the matter one way or the other, why has the Minister taken a decision regarding this Newfoundland railway which leaves both the railway system and the highway system, and more important, the employees of the railway system, in a continued state of limbo?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know yesterday's announcement came as a disappointment to the Hon. Member who wanted the railway abandoned. We chose not to go that route. Instead, we chose to provide up to \$26 million for improving the railway infrastructure, providing equipment, and continuing the containerization program. I believe the Hon. Member would agree, as does the President of Terra, that these steps will go a long way to improving the service and making it more efficient and reliable.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is reasonably intelligent. He knows that \$20 million over five years is substantially less than previous expenditures. Is the Minister not really saying to the people of Newfoundland, with that paltry sum of money which is a substantial reduction from previous expenditures, that the Government of Canada has no long-term commitment to the Newfoundland Railway or, for that matter, to Newfoundland's highway system? How long will the railway last, with that expenditure of money? Give us a time.

● (1500)

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to the highway system in the Province of Newfoundland, there is in existence a \$180 million joint federal-provincial highways agreement, under which the federal Government picks up \$112 million.

Mr. Crosbie: Signed by me.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mazankowski: In this particular case, the Hon. Member—

Mr. Benjamin: How many Xs?

Mr. Mazankowski: The Hon. Member was a member of a Government that chose not to put any money into the Newfoundland railway system. We are putting \$26 million into upgrading that system.

Mr. Benjamin: The trouble is Newfoundland lost with both of them.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Benjamin: Liberal or Tory, Newfoundland loses.

* * *

NATIVE PEOPLE**NATIVE BUSINESS SUMMIT—MINISTER'S SPEECH**

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Finance, who, at the Native Business Summit on the weekend, urged native people to be greedy by stating, "There is one underlying motive in business shared by all. It is greed. There is nothing wrong with it. We support it wherever it happens". My question is simply this: Was the Minister of State for Finance simply reflecting her personal opinions or was she really stating the party line?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I have given up hope that *The Toronto Star* will ever develop a sense of humour.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. McDougall: If the Hon. Member reads either the transcript or the rest of the article, he will see that I was speaking of the importance of native participation in our business structure. It was a good speech. It was a little ponderous. I thought it needed a little levity, and anyone who heard the speech understood the context of the remark.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, some people may think that this is funny, but when there is a Minister of the Crown urging native leaders to be greedy by suggesting—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Riis: —Oh, I'll quote—by suggesting that there is one underlying motive in business, and it is greed, and she says that there is nothing wrong with it, and then she goes on to say—

Mr. Crosbie: Your greedy howls are heard every day.