



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

TRAN • NUMBER 044 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

—
Chair

Mr. Merv Tweed

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting 44 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The orders of the day are pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a study of rail safety. Our witnesses are Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers, mayor of Montmagny—thank you, and I appreciate the help; Mr. Donald Anderson, the alternate Canadian legislative director of the United Transportation Union; and John Holliday, acting general chairperson of the United Transportation Union.

The normal procedure is to allow you to present for seven minutes or so. Then we'll do some rounds of questioning. I don't know if there's been any discussion as to who will start.

Mr. Anderson, please proceed.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Alternate Canadian Legislative Director, United Transportation Union): Good afternoon, members.

Objectives of the Railway Safety Act are:

- to promote and provide for the safety of the public and personnel, and the protection of property and the environment, in the operation of railways
- to encourage the collaboration and participation of interested parties in improving railway safety
- to recognize the responsibility of railway companies in ensuring the safety of their operations
- to facilitate a modern, flexible and efficient regulatory scheme that will ensure the continuing enhancement of railway safety.

One of the statements from the Foisy report of past:

The government has the responsibility for public safety. They cannot leave such important issues in the hands of the working parties.

Negotiations between the working parties are therefore, for the most part, set on economic goals. Even if safety aspects are addressed in negotiation, the fact remains it could be dealt away with at any time for economic reasons. The UTU Canada's position is that the government can ill afford to allow the issue of employee and public safety to be wrested from government control. To do so is to abrogate the responsibility of public safety. Rail labour representatives participate in a safety regulatory process, but at a diminished level and without much weight being given to them by management. The Railway Safety Act provides for consultation only.

Frequency of inspections, both visual and technological, should have been amalgamated to enhance a fail-safe mechanism. Visual inspections have been reduced due to reductions in regulations, hours of service, workforce, car inspection locations, and certified

car inspectors, as well as increases in train length. The average train length currently would be 8,000 feet, although a fair statement might be that an equal number of trains are reaching train lengths of 10,000 to 14,000 feet.

Voluminous reports from previous inquiries and commissions have been submitted to date. Deregulation has let down the employees, the public, and our environment, since we have not learned from our mistakes and adhered to recommendations.

The extent to which track conditions cause significant safety problems appears to be related to the financial health of the carrier, track life cycle, expenditures for track ratio versus rolling stock, differences in accounting mechanisms, government tax structures, depreciation of company equipment, available capital, and six-axle diesel locomotives.

Canada's statutory approach is one that appears to be based both on inspection and on intercompany safety awareness through the use of health and safety committees, but it is not. A Canadian approach should be based on resolution at the company level through joint equal participation of labour and management, with a strong residual enforcement power granted to the government. The current structure is more adversarial right now, pitting the employer against the government and the employee.

There are factors to be considered in why there are so many derailments and why there are so many accidents: possibly geographic conditions in Canada, deferred maintenance and its implications, changes in technology, uses of technology, changes in maintenance procedures and practices, reductions in workforces, and management philosophy. Labour Canada and Occupation Safety and Health are responsible for rail employees who are not involved with train operation. This includes maintenance of way employees, repair shops, tunnels, viaducts, and others.

The employer is to take steps to ensure that there's no reoccurrence. Labour Canada acts in investigating, reporting regulations, placing responsibilities on employers for investigation, and reporting accidents. The railroads seem to have their own accident reporting and investigation systems.

Other factors that need to be considered: employee negligence, equipment failure, train journal failure, track failure, broken rails, switches, lines, rock slides, specific human failure, getting on and off equipment, which would be related to accidents, backhand and foot injuries, slips, falls, and overall compensation costs.

• (1540)

We need a re-examination of the Canadian railroad operating rules. There certainly seems to be a desire to move in that direction.

I'd also like to say that Transport Canada does not rely on fine collection for enforcement. We'd like to see some fair penalties applied for non-compliance.

The adverse effect of deregulation inspection processes is more a case of monitoring than enforcing. On the credibility of the inspection processes, I believe improvements should result from Transport Canada having more field inspectors to do inspections of the condition of the tracks, to evaluate, monitor, and regulate the quality of the track. The railroads right now seem to create their own standards for track integrity and policing. We'd like to see comprehensive track inspections and photography of the main line with increased frequency.

Car inspection processes should include monitoring, evaluation, and regulation of efficiencies, deficiencies, and risk factors. Inspections should be done in receiving yards, in approved certified car inspection locations.

There currently exists a railway safety consultative committee. It's a tripartite committee, with representatives from stakeholders—the railways in Canada—the unions of transportation, and the Railway Association of Canada. Initially the committee was organized into working groups for addressing such matters as public disclosure of accident information, track inspection requirements, maintenance of signal devices, detection of rock slides, and development of standards for rights-of-way. As I stated before, the union's position is only sought on a consultative basis, and not much weight has been given to it.

On railroad safety, employees are our other concern. Safety committees need to be familiar with rehabilitation programs and training programs. Also, training levels for our operating crews have been diminished, and we'd like those expedited. It's probably because of a reduced workforce, and it's important to get them back to work.

I'll pass it over to John.

Mr. John Holliday (Acting General Chairperson, United Transportation Union): Thank you, Don.

Good afternoon, and thank you for the invitation.

My name is John Holliday. I've worked on the railway part-time since I was 15 years old and full-time since I was 18 years old. I've been in train service for 26 years. My father worked for the Pacific

Great Eastern and the BCR for 32 years and on steam engines for the CPR for two years before that. He died of heart failure when he was 53 years old.

When you work a pool freight or a spare board type of job, it is quite the opposite to a Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 type of shift. You work nights, days, late afternoons, or early mornings, and your biological rhythms get quite confused. Working broken shifts disrupts your eating and sleeping patterns. It's like taking a rest/work schedule, putting it in a blender, and pouring it on a plate. Subsequently, it takes a toll on your health. It affects your brain—and pardon me for my industrial language—and you tend to get moody and bitchy. It affects your digestive system, your stomach, and your intestines. Many rail workers have stomach disorders. I have a small hiatus hernia and bad acid reflux for which I am prescribed medication. But it takes its real toll on your heart. You get heart palpitations. Many railroaders have died of heart failure—not heart attacks, simply heart failure.

Sometimes when the clock strikes high noon, I don't know whether to eat, sleep, have a crap, or wind my watch. I know many of you work in Ottawa and you experience jet lag. Multiply that by ten, divide by three, add a two-hour call, and away you go to work. Then you can get some idea of what we deal with on the railway.

The problem with the federal work/rest rules is that they are not comprehensive enough. Currently CNR would like us to work twelve-hour shifts, six days a week. This is part of the labour strife that we're experiencing today.

• (1545)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, as you know, we as a committee have agreed that we wouldn't be getting into issues directly related to the union negotiations that are going on.

The Chair: I would just caution you that because of the sensitivity, we've agreed that we will not deal with issues around that labour issue.

Mr. John Holliday: Certainly. Understood. Thank you, sir.

Another problem with the railroad is post-traumatic stress syndrome. I can give you some examples, but maybe we can get into those later.

I have to tell you that I'm from the former BC Rail. Since CN has taken over the operations of the former BC Rail, we've experienced a greatly reduced standard of safety, from operating standards to maintenance standards on the track, as well as in the maintenance of equipment. On the railway, we're entitled to have—and required to have, by law—proper supervision. We're not getting that at CN. You can phone a supervisor, leave a message, and hope to get a call back, but nine times out of ten you will not get a return call.

In my opinion, there's no proper training for new hires. Traditionally, railways have killed a lot of people, often to fatten up the bottom line. This is neither libellous nor scandalous. It is a fact dating back to the days of construction. You can read in textbooks how the CPR murdered groups of Chinese labourers in the Fraser Canyon. They say that for every mile of track on the CPR, there's a body buried. Fatalities are budgeted into any large construction project. I can tell you that when BCR built the Tumbler Ridge branch line, they budgeted for three deaths. Fortunately there were no fatalities.

Recently, on May 14, 2003, two men died when a bridge collapsed at McBride. It went to court, CN pleaded guilty, and they paid the fine. It's the cost of doing business.

Two more men died on June 29, 2006, near Lillooet, on a runaway train disaster. A third was badly injured. All three of the men were friends of mine. The engine involved should have been at a junkyard, not on a main line, let alone on a main line with a steep mountain grade.

My focus is on railway workers. However, since the deregulation of the railway, airline, and trucking industries, some common denominators have been developing. For example, Air Canada is preparing to maintain and repair aircraft in Guatemala. I'm not sure that the maintenance standard in South America is the same as it is in Canada.

I have no axe to grind with CN. I do not begrudge them to make a profit. However, I would like to reiterate that BCR had a higher safety operating standard. It had a higher equipment and track maintenance standard. BCR was proactive rather than reactive. We had a full-time union safety adviser. We had a derailment task force. We had a locomotive cab committee addressing issues of fatigue in the workplace. There have been some very good studies done by NASA and Boeing, and there was a lot of research done in these cab committees.

We had windshield wipers that worked. We joke in CN that the only reason they bring the locomotives to Vancouver is to get the windows washed. And I'm not kidding. The windows are filthy. When the sun shines on you, you can't see out the windows. It's important to see out the windows of a locomotive, and it's important for the windshield wipers to work. I could elaborate on that, but I'm not going to.

At the former BC Rail, we had things called headsets with boom mikes, so that you could talk to your conductor or engineer over the radio.

There were lots of things, and I have some submissions. I apologize that they're not in French, but I didn't understand. Hopefully we can get them translated.

Another thing we had was corner lights on locomotives. Those came as a result of a coroner's inquest in 1981, when we had a train that hit a rock slide just south of Lillooet and the engine plunged into Seton Lake. The body of the brakeman was never found, never recovered.

Since CN took over, we've found more problems with equipment, like unsecured and unstable ladders on the side of railcars. We call

them grab irons, and the bottom step is called a stirrup. We find shaky stirrups and shaky grab irons. They're important for safety. When you climb on a moving boxcar, you don't want those stirrups or grab irons to break. You don't want to fall under the railcar.

At the former BC Rail, we feel that proper legislation and regulations are required for railways, airplanes, and trucks, in order to protect workers and the general public, and also the environment.

Thank you.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Desrosiers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers (Mayor of Montmagny, As an Individual): Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

I am here as a witness to events, catastrophes, accidents or incidents. I will leave it up to you to decide what vocabulary should be used in each case.

For the second time in three years, on January 7, 2007, 24 freight cars of which 4 contained sulphuric acid, derailed near the Montmagny station. Even though there was no spill of dangerous substances, a few of the cars ended up very close to residences.

You will see on the cover photo that one of the cars, which derailed during the night, was on the porch of the white house close to the old station, where many Montmagny community sports, leisure and cultural activities take place.

Despite the fact that the worst case scenario was avoided once again and that there were no injuries, neighbourhood residents are seriously concerned. Even if the causes of the derailment still remain unknown, the speed of the trains is being blamed and with good reason because there have been many catastrophes in the history of the railway in Montmagny over the years.

I will give you the history. Given the multiple incidents that have taken place, it is not surprising that the citizens of Montmagny are concerned, and that they expect that their petition tabled with the city asking for a permanent reduction in train speed to 64 km/h will be accepted by CN or imposed on them. It will be more difficult to have them accept it.

On July 6, 1943, two trains collided on the bridge over the Bras Saint-Nicolas. It must be pointed out that the railway crosses over two rivers that go through the city of Montmagny. A freight train engineer lost his life in this accident and three CN employees were seriously injured. Some 10 other employees suffered minor injuries that did not, however, require them to be taken to hospital.

On April 6, 1954, a passenger train hit a faulty switch at full speed, derailed and demolished a warehouse. The accident took place very close to the station and caused four fatalities, including two conductors and two hoboes. Twenty cases of dynamite were onboard, but none of them exploded. We were lucky. The accident, which was described by employees as one of the most serious accidents to take place in the United States and Canada, was caused by a siding shift which had been left open.

In the fall of 1961, a train collided with a car, causing the death of Lionel Paquet. This incident took place at the level crossing on Saint-Pierre Street.

On January 3, 1963, Gaston Cloutier lost his life following a car accident at the level crossing at Saint-David Avenue.

On November 1, 1966, a car accident at the level crossing near the Gérard Collin factory caused the deaths of four people, including three young girls under the age of 13. The reason given for this accident was the fact that there were no signal lights, along with the fact that several trains were parked on the sidings which led to confusion in the mind of the conductor.

On January 9, 1969, a train left the main rails to move on to a siding and smashed into the Edouard Gendreau hardware store, wounding six people.

On March 30, 1972, a CN employee was fatally wounded while working on a train car a few steps from the station.

On March 13, 1983, the axles and wheels of a car broke close to the station. As the train was moving at low speed, this did not cause a derailment.

In February 1986, a defective wheel on the seventh car forced rail traffic to stop, but did not result in a derailment.

In February 1995, at Saint-François very close to Montmagny, a sleeper car at the end of the train derailed.

On December 5, 1996, because of wheel problems, a car derailed across from the Montmagny station.

In 1997, Gino Anctil died at the Saint-Pierre Street level crossing in Montmagny.

● (1555)

On February 7, 2004, a freight train which had left Halifax for Charny, derailed on the iron bridge over the Rivière du Sud. That is the second river one would cross when travelling from the east. The accident was caused by a bogie failure, and 28 of the 94 cars derailed and fell on the frozen river. The train included two pressurized tank cars containing chlorine. Fortunately, there was no leak of poisonous substances nor was there any loss of life or injury. On top of the interruption of rail traffic, the pedestrian walkway alongside the bridge, built in 1938 by the city of Montmagny, was completely destroyed. It was a rather noteworthy catastrophe.

This was the second derailment in Montmagny in less than three years. The people no longer feel safe in the presence of trains moving at over 64 km/h. Apart from the many previous accidents, the two last major derailments to occur in Montmagny in three years, which happened on the same 800-meter stretch, on the same terrain, have seriously worried the residents of the city. Furthermore, they have organized a committee and have taken the initiative of getting a petition signed—which you will find appended to the brief—aimed at having the train speed permanently reduced. Even though CN does not believe that speed is a factor, the people of the city of Montmagny wish, in order to make this residential area safer, to see the train speed permanently reduced to 64 km/h, because it seems obvious that a train moving at low speed will cause less damage in the event of a derailment.

I will give you the facts. In railway inquiry report No. R04Q0006, drafted by the Transportation Safety Board, the TSB, following the 2004 derailment, it is put forward that the NUCARS simulations showed that the train cars were affected by the bogie's bouncing movement at speeds between 80 and 93 km/h. In 2004, the train was going 93 km/h, almost the allowable limit. It should have been going under 80 km/h. It was, furthermore, disclosed that all of the elements that were likely to cause this bouncing movement of the bogie at high speeds were present. It was furthermore a bogie failure that caused the derailment.

At the time of the 2007 derailment, the freight train was moving at 82 km/h, whereas the maximum speed allowed in Montmagny, according to Transport Canada's rail safety regulations, is 96 km/h. It was travelling at a slightly lower speed, but for freight service, that is very fast for an urban area.

Furthermore, the CN train is already moving at a low speed in certain cities for safety reasons, in light of the proximity of homes. For example, the train travels at 56 km/h between Charny and Saint-Apollinaire; it moves at 48 km/h in the city of Drummondville and at 56 km/h between Beloeil and Montreal. Finally, there are at least three level crossings where many people are part of the traffic either in vehicles, on motorcycles, on bicycles, or on foot in the danger area.

I will tell you about the measures that have been taken. On December 30, 2001, the residents of the Saint-Mathieu neighbourhood, who live alongside the railway, sent a letter to municipal authorities following fruitless representations to CN. In their letter, they deplore the greater and greater speeds of trains, their ever-increasing length, as the gentleman was saying earlier, the heavier and heavier loads on the cars and, often, the more and more toxic contents. All of this makes them fearful for their safety.

In 2004 and 2005, following the derailment of February 7, 2004, dozens of letters were sent to CN asking them to reduce the speed of trains travelling through the municipality. No answers were received on the issue.

In 2007, many organizations gave their support to the city of Montmagny in the form of resolutions to ensure that the speed would be permanently reduced. These include the Conférence régionale des élus de Chaudière-Appalaches, the Montmagny MRC, the Conférence des préfets des MRC de la Chaudière-Appalaches, the city of Pohenegamook, the municipality of Rivière-Bleue, the Union of Quebec Municipalities as well as the federal member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

● (1600)

In summary, citizens within an 800-meter radius of where the last two incidents occurred are concerned. The City of Montmagny speaks for these people who, this time, do not intend to throw in the towel. Too many accidents or major incidents have occurred there over the years for the people to forget the toll of recent years: 13 deaths, 10 people seriously injured, a dozen people with contusions, and 5 derailments. Fortunately, the five derailments did not involve spills, disasters, injuries or deaths. We were lucky, but we would not want there to be a sixth or a seventh incident: that could be the end of it.

For example, in 2007, a railcard stopped about three feet from the window of a house. If it had contained chlorine or another toxic chemical, there could have been a disaster. We have been lucky to have never had a spill. In fact, we would have needed to evacuate everyone within the area because it is in the middle of town. Last time, the incident occurred in the middle of the night, at a time when it is very difficult to evacuate people. No one knows what situation or state residents are in. Some take pills to sleep, and it is difficult to wake them up, others do not want to leave home. We prefer not thinking about the possibility of having to manage a disaster like that.

That is why the City of Montmagny is repeating its request to reduce the speed of trains within the city to 64km/h. The agreement dealing with the amendment to the act recommends imposing harsh penalties such as speed reduction on CN in cases where accidents frequently occur in the same municipality. This is the second time in three years that such incidents have occurred. That is quite disastrous. There were 5 in just under 50 years, without counting the other incidents. If a committee were to issue a decision on the events and impose penalties on CN, that would force CN to be a little bit more careful and vigilant in terms of maintenance.

I am convinced that the people at CN would prefer not to see these accidents occur, but these accidents are often directly linked to work that was not necessarily done adequately on the lines. In the past, CN could use herbicides, pesticides and other toxic chemicals along the rail beds, but it can no longer do so. As a result, vegetation is accumulating there, water levels are increasing, and the water is reaching into the ballast under the tracks. When the temperature goes up and down for example in January and February, the rail bed expands and contracts. I am not a specialist, but I am trying to analyze the situation. It ends up causing accidents like the one that occurred recently.

The people at CN have told us that the last accident was due to switching. A part was apparently not detected by the ultrasound system, went up, and was ripped off by the train. They have also told us that they are obliged to conduct ultrasound verifications each year, but that they are currently doing 8 and they plan to do 10. But even if they did one in December, there was a derailment in February. In no way does that reassure us.

I will now move on to my second recommendation. Since freight is now transported from one large centre to another, because local distribution no longer exists, we recommend that consideration be given to the possibility of building bypasses for this type of train. That would be consistent with what was done for road transportation with the arrival of highways. Highway 132 or 138—and here I am talking about Quebec—are no longer used because freight volumes increased. Highways are now used.

●(1605)

I have one page left to read, but it deals primarily with the history of the arrival of the train and the railway in Montmagny, as well as the Grand Trunk. You will be able to read it when you have the document. The annexes include a map of the houses located along the railway. You will be able to see how many there are. You will also find letters of support and the citizens' petition. That completes

my submission. If you have any questions for me, I'm prepared to answer them.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bell.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

I'll direct this to Mayor Desrosiers.

I previously was mayor of a community that had a railway running through it and I can share many of your concerns. We had industry there dealing with hazardous chemicals as well. The safety of the community is foremost, but I'll leave that questioning to the rest of my colleagues on the committee.

I want to focus on the gentleman from British Columbia and his associate from Ontario.

One of the concerns in the two reports we have seems to indicate that CN—in particular in this case, and we're talking about rail safety in all railways—appears to have had a high number over the last few years, certainly in 2005. The auditor's report and safety management assessment that were done concern me in that the inspection rates for the cars were rated at an overall safety defect rate of 20.6%, or 20% to 21%.

That means one car in five has some kind of safety defect. I realize they can vary from loose sills to defective brake beams, and I gather they vary in importance, but it seems like a high percentage. They talk about the weekly rate changing from 13% to 27%. Almost 54% of 232 locomotives inspected had a safety defect record, and the weekly locomotive safety defect rates ranged from 32% to 69% or 70%, which seems very high.

I'm concerned with some of the other recommendations that seem to indicate in some cases with rolling stock—and I'm not presuming locomotives, but more the cars—that American standards are being used to evaluate whether those cars need to be pulled and improved. It reflects on the rate of reporting incidents as well by using, in some cases, the American standards. I don't know if that's related to CN having a predominance of management coming from the States and applying their standards to Canadian operations, and even further to British Columbia, which has some of the most severe terrain grades and curves in North America. I'm curious if as workers there you have noticed that.

I would make reference to the Foisy commission's report after the Hinton disaster, which indicated that the effectiveness and rigour with which the CTC and Transport Canada move to correct identified problems are inadequate. I'm gathering that relates perhaps to staffing levels, or are their standards not adequate?

If you gentlemen could respond to that—

Mr. John Holliday: First of all, yes, the standards are a little less than they seem to be. A guy who inspects or works on a boxcar is called a car mechanic or a car man, and a CCI is a certified car inspection.

For quite a while at the former BC Rail we had cars that were going between the Gibraltar Mine and north Vancouver. They received no certified car inspections, no CCIs at all. The wheels were not inspected and the brakes were not inspected by a qualified car mechanic.

I'm not sure of the difference in the Association of American Railroads, the AAR, standards. I can't remember what they call it in Canada, but I'm sure they follow the American standards.

Another bad thing is...I heard a story. I tried to get confirmation of this before I came to this committee, but I believe it to be true. The car men were inspecting a train before leaving Prince George. They typically put a red tag on the car that says "bad order", and they staple it. Then a freight crew or a switching crew will switch the car on to a track to be fixed before it leaves the station. The car men go down one side of the train track and down the other side, and every once in a while they put a red tag, a bad order tag, on the side of this boxcar. Half an hour later a foreman came along and pulled the tags off the side of the boxcar.

I believe that story to be true. I don't have confirmation, but this is one instance. I'm not sure why they did it or why they would do it.

In my submission, I have a couple of letters and a little information on the differences in inspections and maintenance standards from the former BC Rail. Obviously, it's now CN.

• (1610)

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Anderson, do you want to respond to that?

Mr. Donald Anderson: I believe reducing the car inspection locations and a reduced workforce are contributing factors to the inspection processes. They're contributing factors to the increase in the number of deficiencies or the number of defects overall.

In the United States, I believe they have an FRA guideline they go by. A car is inspected and it's tracked every 1,000 miles. There is no such standard in Canada.

Mr. Don Bell: In the two reports we have, there seem to be two or three themes.

One is the maintenance of the track, the maintenance of the rolling stock. There seem to be inconsistent reporting methods, and follow-up is one of the issues.

The other is the relationship between the employees and the management in terms of conveying. In the reports, they say there's a disconnect between senior management and the line of employees as to following through on safety initiatives or understanding what is meant by them. There are recommendations talking about weak gaps in employee training, with skills and training, poor internal complaint resolution processes, and poor follow-up on accidents.

It says:

While the audit team was able to verify that accident and incident reporting and analysis processes are implemented, it was not able to find recorded implementation details or follow-up data on the effectiveness of corrective actions (safety measures) in all cases.

In other words, when they're not reported, it's one problem. When they are reported but are not followed up on to ensure that what was recommended is actually done, it seems to be another problem.

The corollary to that is this. In your opinion, does Transport Canada or the Transportation Safety Board have adequate teeth to enforce and do follow-up, or are they stuck with making recommendations?

Mr. John Holliday: Absolutely not.

Mr. Donald Anderson: I'd have to agree with John.

The lack of reporting, I guess for lack of a better word, would be.... Now it's twofold, from a grassroots perspective. Some of that philosophy comes as a result of the men and women who work there. They are just fed up with nothing being done, no corrective action being taken when they do report things. The whole philosophy of the workforce is they don't care any more. They're getting to a situation where no matter how much they try, they just keep getting whipped more. Everybody is sitting there waiting, counting the days, five more years, or three years two months, or one year, or ten more trips, or whatever. That may have something to do with that, increased work pressures or stresses.

To your point, again, I'm following up on reporting. If you do turn it in, if you start turning stuff in too often, there's a fear of reprisal. Transport Canada is virtually understaffed, or possibly underfunded—that's my particular opinion. I'd like to see the Transportation Safety Board—I've read their inquiries, seen their investigations—have a lot more authority to have those recommendations acted upon and implemented. It seems when Transport Canada or the Transportation Safety Board make rulings or recommendations with respect to safety, because the regulatory bodies allow them an exemption, it's just a matter of time, six months to a year, before that's taken away.

A case in point was the Hinton disaster, where cars rolled out of a track on a hill. Right after that they determined that all those tracks coming on a certain grade and in yards would have derails, which was a mechanism put on the rail so if the car started to roll on its own for whatever reason—wind or other cars were put onto it—it would effectively derail the car so it wouldn't go out onto a main line. Anyway, they put lots of derails all over the place. I guess they went from one extreme to another, and it caused a reduction in productivity; it took time to stop and take these derails off manually. Within a year, all those derails, or a majority of them, were taken away. Those were safety devices put in place for the protection of the main lines.

• (1615)

The Chair: Monsieur Laframboise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

My first question is for you, Mr. Desrosiers. Thank you very much for coming. I am going to start with a short introduction. It was important for us that you be here as mayor of Montmagny, because you have experienced certain situations in recent years. First of all, I must tell you that the study this committee is undertaking is non-partisan. All parties believe that there is a problem with railway safety, and we must understand the situation. Transport Canada, above all in the area of railway transportation, particularly over the past five years, has put in place a safety management system. The same is being done for air transportation, and the committee discussed that at other meetings. As part of these safety management systems, the company takes charge. The way things are done has changed. There are fewer visual Transport Canada inspectors, and the company is responsible for the safety of its equipment and its rails. It must establish a management system, and Transport Canada audits it. Transport Canada audits the system, instead of conducting the visual inspections on-site as it did in the past.

I was listening to Mr. Anderson. It is accurate that there are fewer inspections. We would like to see more visual inspections. Everywhere else in the world, when a safety management system is put in place, the visual inspection must not be set aside, as that is what makes it possible to detect problems if the inspections are done systematically.

I want you to tell my colleagues what that can lead to. Over the past five years, you have been through two derailments. So the safety management system... I asked the acting director of the Transportation Safety Board a question on that, and he could not confirm that the famous management systems had reduced the number of accidents. There was some wonderful reduction in the number of accidents, but there was not a reduction for you. More occurred. I would like you to give me an overview about how people are feeling and about the relations you have with the operator who, to my mind, does not always seem to listen to your recommendations.

• (1620)

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: The people in the municipality are putting a lot of pressure on the municipal council, because it represents them. For example, courses were given in the train station located close to the rail line, but everyone cancelled their registration in January. After the derailment, nobody wanted to take courses in that place anymore. So the courses had to be reorganized in another building.

The people who live very close to the rail line often exert pressure. These are the people who organized the petition and collected signatures. People are extremely worried. When trains went by at low speeds, people slept well because they felt safe. But when this type of catastrophe happens, the catastrophe must be managed, including teams of firefighters and so on. Some municipal sectors are completely isolated. People feel powerless and are worried, and so they turn to us.

Since this has happened twice in three years, people don't believe that it won't happen again. The last time it did, CN told people not to worry because major repair work was being carried out and there would be no more reason to worry afterwards. But less than three months later, another derailment happened about 500 metres from the first one, but this time it happened on the west-east line. We were lucky because it did not happen at a time when people were

coming out of the plant: it was 1:15 in the morning. If the derailment had happened when workers were just coming out of the plant, the death toll would have been huge because that is exactly where they would have been. Next door there is a co-op and houses. The people took pictures. The gentleman who lives in the white house put his house up for sale because he does not want to live there anymore. The value of the homes in that sector has fallen because of what happened.

People want the trains to slow down. Of course, we cannot demand that CN lay down a rail line outside of town, but it should be said that 10 or 15 years ago, south of Montmagny, there was what was called the Monk section. The rail line went through a place which was basically deserted and where there were very few homes. The rail lines was dismantled and transferred lower down; the opposite should have happened. The lower line should have remained in place for the tourist trains, or it should have been converted into a cycling path, instead of building the path 20 kilometres outside of town.

People have developed a railway psychosis. They are depressed and have asked me to fix the problem. We regularly speak with CN representatives. I even spoke with them last week. Today, the trains roll by at 40 miles/h. They used to travel at 30 miles/h and they have just started going at 40 miles/h. When I ask them to stay at 40 miles/h, they tell me that they might do this if no one else in Canada was aware of the situation. Unfortunately, I will not be able to—

Mr. Mario Laframboise: You said that Drummondville managed to get the trains to slow down when they travelled through the town. Whom did you speak to? Was it with Transport Canada, which is responsible for regulating this sector? I know that Transport Canada said that trains should slow down for a certain period of time, but what is the situation now?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: I couldn't tell you. We're told that the track is tortuous, that the convoys are longer and that it would then be difficult to increase speed. In another case, we're given other reasons. Honestly, I don't know why the speed is reduced in Drummondville. On the Beloeil to Montreal section speed is reduced and we are monitoring the situation. I think that municipal police monitor it to ensure that CN is not in the wrong. Between Charny and Saint-Apollinaire, there is the Chaudière River. CN probably decided to reduce the speed because of the geography there. CN has had to face many catastrophes, and perhaps it decided to reduce the speed wherever it's most difficult.

• (1625)

Mr. Mario Laframboise: You have the impression that they will continue to ask you to increase speed.

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Yes. I spoke to the vice-president who is responsible for the Winnipeg to Halifax sector, and there's absolutely no way they will agree to a permanent speed reduction.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Thank you to all the witnesses for coming forward today. I'm going to start with Mr. Anderson and Mr. Holliday.

In your testimony today you made reference to deregulation and privatization as being part of the elements, why we're seeing this increase in derailments, this increase in accidents.

We also had testimony this week from Mr. Gordon Rose. I believe you're familiar with him. He spoke to the fact that when he worked for CN when it was Canadian-owned and he worked for BC Rail when it was Canadian-owned, he saw a real contrast when CN became American-owned and BC Rail was transferred over under CN management ownership.

He said when you opened your rules books, when you opened up your time cards, safety was number one when it was Canadian-owned. Now it's not. Now it's number four.

I'm wondering to what extent these factors—deregulation, privatization, and American ownership of CN—have made a difference, in your opinion, in the overall deterioration in safety standards. I'm also wondering to what extent you get a sense that Transport Canada is there tracking violations where there are problems, emerging safety issues. To what extent do you see Transport Canada around, or are they just completely absent?

Mr. John Holliday: We see Transport Canada after the fact. It's exactly what Don said earlier; Transport Canada seems to have no teeth.

To address the issue of American ownership, we feel they have very little respect for Canadian law, Canadian culture, Canadian collective agreements. As a matter of fact, the number of grievances that have been elevated to the level of the Canadian Railway Office of Arbitration I believe is up around 2,000. At CP Rail it's less than 10. We feel that's an indication of a lack of respect for certain issues.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Deregulation was brought in for the economic policies of Canada. Before deregulation it was very restrictive and it didn't allow the companies to move their product in an efficient manner. With the gradual relaxation of some of the regulations, it allowed the carriers to start moving their product in a more efficient manner. As a result of that, because of the way the Railway Safety Act is written, it allows the carriers, the railway companies, to determine their own rules as long as they're in compliance with the Railway Safety Act.

So the railways determine their own rules. They write their own rules, and if they're looking for something that might impede that process, all they have to do is write to the minister for an exemption. If the minister believes the safety of the public is not in jeopardy... and there may be other variables he would consider to allow that exemption to happen.

Mr. Peter Julian: Can I ask both of you what your sense is of people actually showing up for work now in the rail industry, for the locomotive engineers? How would they have felt 10 to 15 years ago showing up to work and how would they feel today? Are they showing up to work thinking, "I hope I survive today"? Or are they showing up saying, "I hope nothing goes dramatically wrong. I know these things haven't been fixed, and I just hope we can get through the day"? Or do they have a certain confidence in the system?

Mr. Donald Anderson: No, the confidence is really lacking at this point, as I say, because of the whole environment, the railway environment. We work the trains.

I'm only going to speak for where I work. I ride the train in my territory. The speed limit is between 60 to 65 miles an hour. So we know when there are track deficiencies. We see what happens.

In order for our guys to get on the train, to put it mildly, the first thing I need to do when I come out that door from work...the equipment I'm going to be riding on needs to be sound. The track bed I'm going to be riding on needs to be sound. The signal system I'm going to be utilizing at work needs to be integral and we need to have rules in place that allow for the safe process and movement of trains.

● (1630)

Mr. Peter Julian: Are you not seeing that?

Mr. Donald Anderson: No, especially with the equipment, the number of derailments, the reduced inspections. We see what's out there. We know what's out there. It's the lack of enforcement. Transport Canada might come around.... Sometimes it'll be a couple of years before they come around. Their inspection process is very reduced, as I said before, probably because of the number of inspections. This is my opinion only, but it seems more of a paper audit than an actual physical inspection.

Mr. John Holliday: Further to what Don said, yes, the stress level has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. I mentioned briefly post-traumatic stress disorder. We deal with so many close calls on the railway that sometimes it just takes a minor incident; it's like the straw that breaks the camel's back, and then, you know, a person is very stressed out.

I deal with conductors on the former E & N as a union rep, and I can tell you...there was one fellow who was working on a passenger train. One day he had somebody jump off the train at 40 miles an hour. They stopped the train, went back, and got this guy. A month later they ran over somebody and decapitated him. A month after that he had a minor incident and he was quite stressed out. He had a note from his doctor. He went to Mexico on a family vacation for a month, and when he got back he was fired because he didn't have the proper leave of absence.

We took that to arbitration and we lost. I couldn't believe it. This was a long-time employee, a conductor on the passenger train on the former Esquimalt-Nanaimo corridor on Vancouver Island.

There are numerous examples of guys who have had a number of close calls, and then they have one simple one, and the company gives them a hard time to book off, to take a day off. Eventually they just quit because the frustration level is so high. They can get no compensation from WCB. They get the runaround.

It's frustrating. The stress level is enormous, and it doesn't seem to be dissipating.

The Chair: Monsieur Blaney is next.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wish to take this opportunity to greet you as well as members of the committee. I'm very pleased to sit on this committee. I'd also like to thank the witnesses, and most specifically the mayor of Montmagny, who is showing how much he takes the interests of his fellow citizens to heart. You have managed to forge quite a broad consensus concerning railway safety, a concern which is shared by members of the committee.

When I sat on the committee, among other things, we examined a bill to regulate noise around marshalling yards. We're eager for it to obtain royal assent when it comes back from the Senate.

My first question would be for the mayor. As soon as the accident happened, Mr. Paul Boisvenue, a Transport Canada inspector, was mandated to keep the minister informed of the ongoing investigation. We know that first of all, speed had been reduced.

Can you tell us about the measures that have been taken since January?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Since January, specific conditions forced CN to reduce the speed of the trains. Because of the damage in the perimeter in question, for the first three weeks, the train went 10 miles/h and crossed the city at that speed. The following two weeks, the speed went up to 20 and then 30 miles/h because there was still work going on. They had to rebuild part of the ties on the bridge, and they were all replaced. During that period, the trains always ran at reduced speed. CN made a commitment to phone me a week in advance to notify me if the speed was to be increased the following week.

Meanwhile, on our side, we exerted pressure on politicians and various organizations. Earlier, I was listening to a witness who said that people were stressed out and traumatized. What can the law do when citizens are stressed and traumatized by the effects of the derailment in their neighbourhood? What can we do to solve that? Are there any provisions in the legislation that will allow the Department of Transport to say that following such incidents, for an indeterminate period, CN trains will cross the city at a given speed while the investigation is ongoing? The thing is, the TSB investigation can last a year and the final results may only be released two years later.

Why doesn't the Department of Transport simply acknowledge that such an incident happened in Montmagny and that damage was caused? If it's a matter of repairing, paying, repaving, replacing lawn, repairing buildings, there's no problem. But there are other problems that we will only see afterwards, namely how people are traumatized and how citizens are frustrated. Dozens of letters were written and we've had no response from CN. Right now I have quite a good relationship with the person responsible at CN: as long as I don't demand that trains run at 40 miles/h when he wants them to run at 60, we will get along fine. Right now, the train travels at 40 miles/h. Perhaps CN will tolerate the 40 mile/h limit for some time yet so that

people can regain some feeling of safety, and perhaps it will increase the speed gradually thereafter, but that wouldn't solve the problem.

We have taken action. We've had to displace people and do things during that period, but we remain stuck with major problems. Once CN has repaired its facilities... In that regard, I must tell you that they are really professional because when it comes to restoring the location of the derailment, they're hard to beat. Succeeding in having a train pass there again two or three days later when the bridge crossing a river was destroyed is quite something. My hat is off to them. Let's say that their teams are fantastic. But they should be just as good when it comes to maintenance and other aspects. We at the city remain stuck with the collateral effects.

• (1635)

Mr. Steven Blaney: In your opinion, is the current 40 mile/h speed satisfactory to the local population?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Their feeling of safety would be reinforced?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Yes, it would be reinforced. The noise is far less aggressive, so you feel safer. It's also a question of noise because the train passes at night. When the ground is frozen and the train passes at higher speeds, it has effects on the residences too. If the speed is reduced too much, we get another phenomenon: the people aren't happy because they wait too long at level crossings. We have to strike a balance. I think that 60 or 64 km or 30 miles/h within the municipality is logical. In Montmagny, drivers have to travel at 50 km/h. I fail to see why a train should have the right to travel across the city at 100 km/h.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Did you express these concerns to Mr. Boisvenue, the representative?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: I didn't speak to Mr. Boisvenue because he is assisting the TSB in its inquiry; he is there as an observer. But I did speak to people from the TSB, just not directly to Mr. Boisvenue.

Mr. Steven Blaney: For the time being, you found a compromise with CN regarding 40 miles/h. We're hoping that the bills we will put in place will—

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: CN made a commitment to maintain that speed for three months. Perhaps they knew that they'd have work to do for three months. I don't know if that's a concession or if they're forced to do that because of the work that's going on—

Mr. Steven Blaney: Do I have a little time left?

My question is for Mr. Anderson.

In a document we were given, it says that accidents have increased in Canada since deregulation. Yet, there are three times fewer accidents in the United States. Is there some reason for that in your opinion? I'd like to hear your views on this subject.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Donald Anderson: Three times...?

Mr. Steven Blaney: There are three times fewer accidents in the United States than Canada?

Mr. Donald Anderson: It's probably because of the standards for car inspection, which would have a lot to do with that.

Gee, I really can't say anything other than that, but it's the maintenance of the cars, which would probably—

Mr. Steven Blaney: Of the cars—and the railroad as well, I guess?

Mr. Donald Anderson: They probably have the same amount of track, the same amount of traffic.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Volpe.

[Translation]

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to welcome all the witnesses.

Mayor Desrosiers, I'd like to ask you a very brief question. In your opinion, would the number of accidents that occur in your municipality be reduced to zero if CN reduced the speed to 40 miles/h?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Could you repeat the question? I lost a bit at the beginning.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Do you believe all of the existing CN problems would be resolved if trains were to travel 40 miles/h or less?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: No, that's not what I'm saying.

What I am saying though is—

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Wait a moment, Mr. Mayor.

Are the problems only caused by CN management or could there be other problems that the municipality, the province or other authorities may have some effect on?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: An effect on CN?

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: We said 40 miles/h because the effects of derailment at that speed are far less devastating. No one can say there will never be another accident if trains travel at that speed. Travelling 40 miles/h will not necessarily prevent all accidents, but it will make people feel safer and cause less damage when events like those we've experienced occur, I am sure of this. If $E=mc^2$ still stands, if you double the speed, you quadruple the effects.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Okay, thank you.

[English]

Mr. Anderson, I see Mr. Holliday is taking a quick break, so you're going to have to answer all the rest of the questions.

I want to follow up something raised just a moment ago, because as I was looking through the briefing notes as well, it seems that accidents per million train miles are considerably higher in Canada than in the United States.

Is it because of the definition of accidents that must reported, or is it because the conditions of the track and trains and equipment are so deteriorated in the infrastructure in Canada that these accidents are just begging to happen?

Mr. Donald Anderson: The accident—

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I'm sorry, Mr. Anderson, maybe it's unfair to you, but we have a document. I think all members have Library of Parliament research. I'll just give you an example, so you'll know what I'm referring to.

In the year 2006, for example, of 95.6 million train miles in Canada, there were a total of 1,141 accidents, or a ratio of 11.9 per train mile. In the United States, which had 810 million train miles, there were 2,864 accidents, for a ratio of 3.5; so it's 3.5 as opposed to 11.9. It's pretty well been the same going back to 1989, though there have obviously been some variations—some years it's been a little higher, some years a little lower.

Is it because the track and the equipment in Canada are so far gone that accidents are begging to happen, or is it because the definition of accidents, or what is reportable, is so much more strict in Canada that the number of accidents being reported reflects that more difficult standard to meet?

● (1645)

Mr. Donald Anderson: With respect to the ratio, I can't in fact answer that. That's a heck of a big difference.

All I can say is that it would have to do with the safety standards applicable, the maintenance standards, the track deterioration.... Not just from my own perspective but from what our colleagues tell us at work, I believe the road bed is deteriorating. Although they seem to spend money on the infrastructure with rail programs, I don't know if a lot of that is fixed to the standards we now have, because they fix them to a minimum standard today. But tomorrow that standard could change; it could be below the minimum standard, whereas at one time in Canada we had very high standards.

That's really unfair to say, because the density of traffic we currently have over those rail lines has probably increased by 15%—

Hon. Joseph Volpe: By about 25% since 1989.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Okay, since 1989.

The Chair: Monsieur Crête.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I'm sorry, Mr. Anderson. I'll probably get back to you.

A voice: I'd like to address this question.

The Chair: He's done his time.

A voice: Sorry.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Do it later, in the next round.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Desrosiers, I think CN agreed to a temporary speed reduction as a result of your quick response and of community support. That said, I attended a first meeting where that was stated quite clearly and I think that is when they agreed to do something, despite any possible regulation.

You said they are repairing things very quickly in order to increase their speed once again. Would your recommendation of fines for repeat accidents be a way to compel CN to do more prevention?

You also made a recommendation to set 64 km/h as a permanent speed limit. Would it be useful for the committee to support that position until such time as there is a permanent solution, until we can say there is no more danger?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: One of my objectives in appearing here today was to find out the committee's position.

I think that if we want to get things moving, the rail company needs to feel as though it is under some pressure, that it may lose certain things or certain advantages. In CN's case if we can say there are two or three accidents around Montmagny, it would be good for the committee members to endorse the city's recommendation to reduce the speed to 40 miles/h for the moment to reassure people.

I'm using the example of Montmagny, but not all cities in Canada have experienced 5 derailments, 7 or 8 accidents and 10 fatalities. In fact, Montmagny probably experienced most of these problems despite its small size, with a population of 12,000. So, to reassure people, it would be good to get the committee's support.

In the future, there should some type of legislation to sanction CN rail accidents. This could lead them to have a sharper focus, to ensure more effective equipment maintenance and to be more careful. I think it could help them make improvements. I agree with having audits done, but there should also be some sanctions. We know that CN has consistently challenged the Transportation Safety Board's reports, and continues to do so. We feel there is no solid basis for our discussions with them. So, perhaps this could be included in the legislation.

We could also use the carbon exchange. When there is a spill due to a derailment, CN should get negative points on the exchange. Rail transport should normally protect the environment, but it is disrupting it and disrupting people's peace of mind. CN should be sanctioned under the carbon exchange once it is set up. For the time being, since it has not yet been set up, the committee should make a statement regarding the fact that the municipality of Montmagny has been penalized more so than other cities in Canada.

At the moment, the committee recommends that the speed limit be set at 40 miles/h to reassure people. This is an east-west stretch. If you dismantle the Montmagny bridge, you can't get to Halifax. There is no other route. To go to Halifax, you have to go through Montmagny. There are two rivers, two bridges, and citizens living alongside the rail line. I have been asked why people were allowed to settle there. My reply was that you can't simply rewrite Canadian history. People built houses alongside rivers and rail lines, because those were the means of transportation at the time. You cannot rewrite history. That is how things are and will remain.

I sincerely believe that if companies do not offer the services they had undertaken to offer, it makes sense for them to be sanctioned. This is how things go in the field of communications and in other types of companies. I cannot see why this should not be the case for CN. It is as though the company were shielded from these things, because there is no legislation on this.

● (1650)

Mr. Paul Crête: In your second recommendation you say that we should consider building a bypass track. Actually, it is the same as

for main streets that used to go through villages. Later on, highways were built.

In the case of Montmagny, does that seem to you to be the main solution we should consider or are you open to other types of solutions, such as permanently decreasing the speed limit, or perhaps other options?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Because of the geography and configuration, I don't think that a bypass in Montmagny would be the most economical solution, because the river widens when you go a little bit further south. In a case like Montmagny, the solution would be a reduction in speed, in addition to a commitment from CN to conduct more verifications and analyses. They have removed the switching they had at the station and things like that. That should normally make us safer, but time will tell.

If the geography were more accommodating, a bypass could be an option. In my opinion, railway transportation should develop even more. Since there is no alternative route, we often have to wait to let trains pass. The design is not efficient. If we want to build efficiently, there would have to be double tracks in certain areas to allow for more transportation in Canada.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, to all three of you, for attending today. Your testimony is very helpful as we move forward in addressing some of these safety issues.

I'd like to address quickly, first of all, what appears to be perhaps the elephant in the room, and I'd like to just make a statement. That is, all three of you, even though we're addressing rail safety in general...your comments have, for the most part, focused on one company, that being CN.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: The one we know.

[English]

Mr. Ed Fast: Am I correct in stating that if you had to focus on one particular issue, or perhaps company, within the rail system in Canada, it would be CN?

As perhaps a follow-up question, which I'll pose to Mr. Anderson, is the safety culture within CN markedly different from what it would be in perhaps some of the other railways?

Mr. Donald Anderson: First of all, all I can speak to is CN, because that's where I work. But I have sat on the health and safety policy committee at CN Rail, and we have different executives from the various unions who also sit on both committees, both at CP Rail and at CN. They tell us that there is a marked difference in philosophy over there. In order to get something to move at CN Rail, it's like pulling hens' teeth.

For the regional carriers, I really can't say.

● (1655)

Mr. Ed Fast: That's consistent with what we heard from Mr. Rhodes as well, who appeared before us on Monday, who had experience at BC Rail and then later on at CN.

That concerns me, that we have such a variance in the safety cultures within the different companies that operate our railways.

As second question, again to you, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Julian had earlier suggested that privatization had been the cause of a decline of safety within the railways, and I sensed that you were trying to correct him somewhat by saying that privatization wasn't the issue, because privatization obviously led to some efficiencies—I think all of us would agree that efficiency is good—but it's more a lack of sufficient regulations and oversight of the railway industry that is causing these problems. Am I correct in my characterization?

Mr. Donald Anderson: Absolutely.

Mr. Ed Fast: All right.

Then, as a follow-up, I was concerned about Mr. Holliday's reference to perhaps individuals from the company even going and pulling defect stickers off some of the railcars.

You indicated that you didn't have confirmation of that. I would ask that you perhaps provide this committee with that, because at this point in time, it's simply hearsay. We'd like to have hard evidence of that, if it's available.

Mr. John Holliday: Sure.

Mr. Ed Fast: Then finally, again, Mr. Anderson, you'd also talked about various reports over the years that had not been followed. I assume you're referring to things such as TSB reports, the Foisy commission, that in fact there appears to have been a lack of follow-up on implementing many of those recommendations. Is that what you said?

Mr. Donald Anderson: Well, to have those recommendations still in force.

I also believe that after accidents or injuries sometimes it's a knee-jerk reaction. Those recommendations need to be evaluated, communicated to all stakeholders, and then communicated to one another again to see what's logical, what's not logical, or cost related, I would imagine.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Holliday, you had indicated—I believe you almost referenced the fact—that you were born into a railway family, that most of your life has been spent working within the railway system.

Mr. John Holliday: That's correct. I grew up on railway bread and butter, a second-generation railroader.

Mr. Ed Fast: Do you recall ever, during those years, any government undertaking a full, independent review of the railway system in Canada and safety within that system? Do you recall that ever happening?

Mr. John Holliday: The first thing that comes to mind is the CANALERT study of 1995, released in 1996. It was called *CANALERT '95*, and I believe it was implemented after the Hinton disaster.

That's the only one I can think of, off the top of my head.

Mr. Ed Fast: So you're not aware of any further safety reviews that have been done since 1995 on a national basis, with the power to make sweeping recommendations.

Mr. John Holliday: There was a National Research Council study done in 2003, based on a study done in 1995, I believe, comparing the former BC Rail to CN.

Mr. Ed Fast: Again, that's company-specific, not a nationwide review.

Mr. John Holliday: Oh, right. I see what you mean.

Mr. Ed Fast: So you're not aware of any?

Mr. John Holliday: No, not off the top of my head.

Mr. Ed Fast: Do you recall any formal safety review being conducted by this particular committee in, say, the last 10 years?

Mr. Donald Anderson: No.

Mr. John Holliday: No.

Mr. Ed Fast: You're aware that now not only this process is going on but the government has struck an independent panel to review safety within the rail system in Canada?

Mr. Donald Anderson: Are we aware of it?

Mr. Ed Fast: Yes.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Yes, we are.

Mr. Ed Fast: Okay.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fast.

Monsieur Bélanger, you have about two and a half minutes.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Welcome to Ottawa, Mr. Desrosiers.

I have several short questions. Has the issue of level crossings been resolved?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Are you referring to the accidents that have occurred at the level crossing?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Have you received funding to eliminate the level crossings?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: No. All of the level crossings are still there. There are three within the area I am talking about, plus one or two unofficial crossing points.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Have there been discussions to eliminate them?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Has the municipality requested that?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: As a municipality, no.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: My next question is not for you, but for our research staff. It deals with your first recommendation. Could you provide us with a short briefing note stating which authority sets the speed limits and in what circumstances? Knowing that would be very helpful.

I have another question on bypasses. If there were a bypass, would you still want there to be some kind of branch line at the current station?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: At present, no freight is being picked up at the station. The station now belongs to the city; it no longer belongs to the railway company. The passenger train stops in Montmagny when someone buys a ticket over the Internet or by phone. Otherwise, it does not stop there. You can't buy a ticket in Montmagny. If there were another segment farther out, with a drop-off point, that would mean some work.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you know how many passengers are using the train?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: From Montmagny? Very few.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Would you agree with discontinuing service there?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: Railway service is not—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am talking about passengers.

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: If there were a bypass that wasn't—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: If Montmagny were bypassed and the station was no longer linked, there would be no more passenger service. Do you agree with discontinuing that service?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: No, we would like passenger service to develop, but at present, there are very few users because of buses and other services. We could keep the segment and link it to the bypass route. I think I would maintain passenger service.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Would the city be prepared to make a contribution?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: You're asking a lot of questions that I cannot answer. We would have to consider the costs, the volume, and so on.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I understand, but have you already considered that?

Mr. Jean-Guy Desrosiers: No, not at all, because what we are currently concerned about is the 40 km/h speed.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank our guests for being here today and for providing us with information.

We have some committee business to discuss. I'd like to take a couple of minutes of adjournment while our guests leave us. Then we'll get back here to discuss the two motions.

Mr. Bell.

Mr. Don Bell: I have one point as our guests leave. Mr. Fast had asked a question for confirmation about the incident of supervisors removing the bad-order designation. I did send over the confirmation. It was in the phase two report, which indicated that it was not uncommon for a car that had been bad-ordered to have a defect card removed by the supervisor and for the car to be allowed to continue in service.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Holliday, I know you have some documents you're going to leave with the committee. I will see that they get translated and distributed. Did you have one final thing, very briefly?

Mr. John Holliday: Yes, I'd like to thank the committee, and I'd like to invite the committee to go on a field trip to the Squamish and Lillooet subdivision of the former BC Rail to appreciate the terrain and the geography conditions. I can tell you that the former BC Rail had a comprehensive rock-scaling program. CN did no rock scaling for two years. BC Rail would scale a certain area—do rock scaling—and five years later go back to the same rotten rock area and scale it.

Regarding the question about future track and equipment standards and derailments and everything, I believe this to be just the tip of the iceberg in this country because of the lack of maintenance done in the last few years, and I think it's going to catch up awfully quickly. I think what we've seen lately is just the tip of the iceberg.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate your attendance here today.

We'll recess for three minutes.

•

_____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, and welcome back.

I do want to advise the committee, just to give you a heads-up, that I've been advised that on Monday, April 23, the minister will be available with department officials on Bill C-6. I know we still have another opportunity for witnesses, but that was the day he was available, and I would seek confirmation that we can confirm him. Monday will be Bill C-6.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is this including Mr. Preuss?

The Chair: If he's here, he'll be here.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, we would then essentially suspend the railway inquiry for one meeting—

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Peter Julian: —but we still have witnesses to come on that. I'm fine with that day, as long as Mr. Preuss is there as well.

The Chair: It is the minister and department officials, so I'm assuming Mr. Preuss will be here. The minister is here for the first hour and the department is here for the full meeting.

Go ahead, Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: What is his expectation? Is he going to be here on estimates, or is he here on Bill C-6?

The Chair: He's here on Bill C-6.

I'll get to estimates later. We have him booked also; we have a tentative time for that.

But because it's Wednesday, I want to confirm with everybody for Monday. I just want to make sure everybody understands that it will be Bill C-6. It will be the department's and the minister's appearance on the bill. I'll get into this further; I just wanted to give you a heads-up for Monday, as to whether it's suitable.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: How long is his statement going to be?

The Chair: I have no idea. I don't control that.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Do you know, Brian?

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Less than three hours.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Could we say five minutes maximum? Are you guys okay with that?

The Chair: I don't think we can say that. I could say seven minutes, because that's what we give every other witness.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: He's only going to be here an hour. There are seven opposition members who probably want to have an opportunity to ask him his views on the bill, and there are five members on the government side who probably meet with him for at least four hours a day every day of the week, so they don't need to ask—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ed Fast: Strike that from the record, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I'm joking.

If all of us get five minutes apiece, that's only 35 minutes.

The Chair: Again, I can't speak for the minister. I only know that he's available that day on Bill C-6. I guess I'm more or less looking for confirmation that we could have him here.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I don't know whether Brian wants to—because we're all friends here for at least the next couple of minutes....

Mr. Chair, are you looking for a suggestion or a motion? Or do we want to reach a consensus about what we'd like the minister to do in terms of his availability? He could come here and say, "Guys, you've read the bill. My department wrote it. Ask me any questions you want." Or do we want a...? Is that what you're looking for us to do?

The Chair: No, I'm not, really. I'm just advising the committee that the minister will be here. We'll have a two-hour meeting at which the department will be present for the full two hours and the minister will be present for the first hour.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I would like to first of all respond that of course we're all friends here—except for Mr. Watson and me.

The Chair: We do have two motions to get to.

Mr. Brian Jean: I can ask the minister, and I can relay to him that what you're suggesting is a short five- or seven-minute speech and lots of questions. How does that sound?

An hon. member: You're off my Christmas card list.

The Chair: Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There are two things, Mr. Chair. Can we do better than assume that Mr. Preuss will be there?

The Chair: He will be there, I'm told.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you. You may recall that last time I had some questions to ask of him, but pulled back because of your ruling, which I respected.

Second, would you know if there's a policy that this new government has imposed on its ministers that they can only attend meetings for one hour? Of all the committee meetings I've been to when ministers have attended, after one hour they leave. Is there a policy that I'm not aware of that has been set by cabinet to limit their ministers to one-hour meetings?

The Chair: I can tell you that the minister has advised through the committee, or to me, that he will be available for two hours on main estimates. So I don't believe it's a policy; I just believe that's the minister's time.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Knowing that, then, on Monday we will deal with Bill C-6 with the minister, and departmental officials for the full meeting.

Mr. Don Bell: Does that mean that as a follow-up we'll resume the CN matter and then Transport Canada in two subsequent meetings?

The Chair: What I want to do is get Monday's meeting organized so that everybody isn't surprised. But I'm going to ask at the end of the motions that we talk about a subcommittee meeting early Monday, or sometime Monday.

But we are going back to rail safety.

• (1715)

Mr. Don Bell: We should likely give CN early enough advance warning that they can be here on Wednesday, and—

The Chair: Yes. We have confirmed CN for Wednesday. We are waiting to hear from CPR. I can tell you that, but I didn't want to do that pre-empting a subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Don Bell: And then a subsequent meeting would be Transport Canada, where we can take all the information we have and ask questions.

The Chair: Again, I think it should be under a subcommittee that we make those determinations.

We're going to deal with Mr. Fast's motion. I think everyone has it in front of them in both official languages. For time purposes, I won't read it unless it's necessary. I know we have votes at 5:30.

Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We heard a number of witnesses on the remaining issue. Ms. Greene was here. Unfortunately, she wasn't as forthcoming as perhaps she would have been had there not been an ongoing negotiation with their union. It was very clear to me, and certainly to members of the committee on this side of the table, that we need to provide some support to the international remailers who work within Canada.

I just want to list a number of facts that I think are salient and need to be considered.

For well over 20 years, remailers have been allowed to do business in Canada. Suddenly, about three years ago we had a challenge by Canada Post to an industry that has developed in reliance upon their understanding that this was a legal activity. Canada Post assumed this was a legal activity, and then somebody pointed out to Canada Post, probably a smart lawyer, that there was a difference in the wording of section 14 of the Canada Post Corporation Act in the French and English versions. The English version refers to “collecting, transmitting and delivering letters to the addressee thereof within Canada”. The French version doesn't use the term “within Canada”.

Even with my primitive understanding of the French language, it's pretty clear from that particular section that there is a difference in the two languages. Based on that distinction, the matter was litigated all the way to the Supreme Court, and of course the remailers lost. Ultimately, it is for Parliament to address this issue.

Just to outline additional facts, it's estimated that the contribution to the Canadian economy by the remailing industry is somewhere around the \$300 million mark in terms of total profits annually. There are hundreds of businesses that employ thousands of people across Canada. They are engaged in different aspects of the business, including preparing, designing, translating, sorting, printing, and delivering letter mail, and that is mail weighing 500 grams or less, to destinations outside of Canada. There are seven or eight major companies in Canada that simply deliver international mail.

After more than 20 years, suddenly the rules are changed for these companies that have relied on an understanding that was even concurred in by Canada Post. This is a huge industry in Canada. We're talking about thousands of jobs. We, as Parliament and as a committee, have to do something about that.

My motion is very simple. It simply asks that the government amend the Canada Post Corporation Act to clarify the English and French versions of the section so as to remove Canada Post's exclusive privilege to deliver letter mail to destinations outside Canada.

The Chair: Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I pass. This motion is highly premature and I will not support it. I certainly encourage my colleagues to defer it, which would be best, so that the committee can deal with it appropriately, but if the government is in a rush to have me concur in this, then they won't have my concurrence.

I don't have a difficulty in studying something before making a decision. We've had one session where we had witnesses who were not able to connect and talk to each other. And I have a ton of questions as to whether or not we should even consider this. I'm quite prepared to listen, but I have questions in terms of what the magnitude is, and I can't just rely on a document. I don't know what Mr. Fast has read and where he got it, but I'd want to have some witnesses here, and we should have a thorough examination of the issue, including what the consequences are of affecting the exclusive privilege of Canada Post. We haven't even touched that.

So I will not participate in what could become the dismantling of the exclusive privilege if it could affect first class mail delivery across the country, especially in rural Canada. That affirmation has been made here and it hasn't been rebutted. We need to hear from Canada Post. We need to hear from the remailers. We need to hear from our research staff in terms of the law. We need to have a sense of what's going on around the world.

There are all kinds of things that we were throwing around during the one-hour session we had with them that I've not had a chance to get answers to, and I think this is jumping the gun. It may be that we may want to come to this conclusion. I suspect not, but I certainly can't do that today.

• (1720)

The Chair: Monsieur Laframboise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: You know, Mr. Chairman, I am somewhat disappointed in the way that we are discussing this matter today. I was the one who had tabled the motion to discuss re-mailing. I agreed, in good faith, not to question witnesses on anything that might be detrimental to labour relations. Unfortunately, I have a problem, as I was unable to ask the questions I wanted to ask. I wonder if adopting this motion will influence negotiations. Will the Canada Post Corporation lose money if this motion is adopted? As Mr. Bélanger said, will other amendments be made that will result in a reduction of service elsewhere because Canada Post will have to save somewhere?

I have a problem. Colleagues, you asked us not to question the witnesses last time. We did not have Ms. Greene on the same panel, because we did not want to discuss labour relations. I suggest that we suspend discussions until after the Canada Post negotiations, or that we bring the witnesses back and that we remove the condition to not discuss issues relating to labour relations. I suggest bringing the witnesses back to a meeting so that we can talk about the impact of this decision on labour relations and that we remove the restrictions we had imposed. Today, I will be forced to vote against the motion, unless Mr. Fast agrees to postpone it. I would prefer letting negotiations wrap up at Canada Post and discussing it immediately after that, or bringing the witnesses back so that we can talk about labour relations problems, because I am afraid that this decision will influence the negotiations on labour relations that are currently underway at Canada Post. If that were the case, I would call it into question. I would not want other services to be penalized because of a decision we have made today. In that regard, I agree with Mr. Bélanger. Under the circumstances, our colleague must agree to postpone the motion, otherwise I will be forced to vote against it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm a bit perplexed as well, Mr. Chair. I understand that the minister said he would conduct a review in December. I assume he has done his homework. If so, where is that review and where is the information? It hasn't come before committee yet. I assume the government will be doing that.

I'm concerned, as my colleagues are, about what the impacts are. There's an impact on the jobs of international remailers, but there is also a potential impact on rural mail delivery.

I represent the urban riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, and we don't have rural service. But if I were in a riding like Abbotsford or Fort McMurray—Athabasca, where there are rural communities, I would want to get to the bottom of this to find out what the potential impact would be on rural mail service.

So I think this is very premature. I'm a little surprised by it, and I certainly won't be supporting it.

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: First of all, this is not a government motion. It was brought by a government member, but we certainly believe in democracy, and every one of our members should have the opportunity to exercise their right to that.

In relation to Mr. Bélanger's comment, I believe that a letter was circulated from the international remailers. That's the letter that was referred to. All committee members received it; whether they read it or not is another question.

Finally, to respond to the comments of Mr. Julian, Monsieur Laframboise, as well as other members from the Liberal Party, how could this affect rural mail when it's been going on for 25 years? International remailers have been working for 25 years and it has never affected rural mail, or at least we have no evidence to suggest it might. So how could it, if it were passed?

Quite frankly, I think the main concern here is the enforcement of actions against the international remailers and this committee working towards that.

I wonder if Mr. Fast could comment further on the particular issue of emergency on this.

• (1725)

The Chair: I have Mr. Fast on the list, so I will ask him to keep his powder dry for a few minutes.

Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I hope not to be too long, but I thank you very much for this.

As I recall the debate, when we had the interview, the issue revolved around the fact that Canada Post had sought a court decision on the definition of "exclusive privilege" in either or both of the two official languages. What we wanted to do was make sure that we had that clarity.

The courts decided on a particular definition, but the courts aren't the ones that execute the law. The Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada, can determine what it is that it wants to do.

Mr. Jean, I share the view that if something's been going on for 20 years, it probably hasn't caused anybody any harm. So what I'd like to do, rather than create a problem, is try to solve one that's emerged. Now whether it's emerged because of activity or because Canada Post sought and got a definition it wanted post factum is another story.

In the final analysis, what's going to happen is that the government will have to make that definition. It has to bring in an amendment to the legislation that says this is what that definition should be. So

whether we do it here or whether it's done in the House, it's going to end up in the House.

I can appreciate, from a political, tactical point of view, that perhaps the government might want to see whether a committee here, reflective of the dynamics in the House, would be in favour. Quite frankly, my colleague, Mr. Bélanger, is quite right. If you don't see what the definition is going to be, it's going to be kind of hard to say that as a holus-bolus principle, this is what it is.

On the second item, and that is what the impact might be on rural postal delivery, I'm one of those who still thinks Canada Post has a legal obligation to deliver first class mail. That means that as long as it is part of a government entity, the Government of Canada underwrites that cost. We shouldn't be looking to private sector arguments about how that's going to be conducted.

I was around here when Canada Post and the private sector were diametrically opposed. Now we're obviously in a different world. If it's a question of seeking to have a commercial advantage, that's fine. But I don't want to be part of something that gets commercial advantage as a result of some obfuscation of language. So let's clarify the language.

I appreciate what Mr. Fast is trying to do. Earlier on, in consultation with my colleagues, we had the kind of conversation in which the impression was that a motion would come forward and we would ask for clarification. The government still has the initiative one way or the other, and that still has to be done.

Mr. Fast, I find myself in a position in which I'd like to support exactly what you've written down, but it's going to be very difficult, because there is no implementation ability, even if I support this. The government, taking a report from the chairman of this committee, will have to go to the House and say that we heard what the committee would say, and here's the language. Then I might find myself at odds with the language the government is going to put forward, and nobody is any further ahead.

What I would propose, Mr. Fast, is that perhaps you go back to the minister and say that around the table there is great concern about the confusion that will have been caused and that has been caused by the interpretation the courts have given to this language, and ask for clarification, because there are people who are anxious to do the right thing, and the right thing does not include putting people out of business.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bell.

Mr. Don Bell: Thank you.

I would share some of my colleague Mr. Volpe's comments. I generally don't have a particular problem with carrying on with the way it's been done in the past. That's having mail outside Canada handled by independent businesses. In my mind, certainly, Canada Post should have exclusive privilege within Canada. I think the fact that the system has worked in the past...

Now I appreciate their interest in securing additional revenue sources, and I see that as being used to perhaps fund less profitable sides. The danger is that they appeared here—with us having had some restrictions on what we were going to say—and then left and maybe assumed that the issue was settled as far as our minds were concerned. And I don't hear that it is. There are different points of view, even among colleagues within our party.

I think it would benefit from a discussion. I'm not prepared to support this at this moment without that discussion. But I have to say that I'm inclined to be sympathetic to the position put forward by Mr. Fast.

• (1730)

The Chair: Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast: The committee may be under the mistaken impression that I've been disingenuous in bringing this motion forward. That's not the case. The purpose of this was actually as a response to some of the concerns that have been raised by the remailers. Ultimately it is an issue of timing. They are panicking now because it appears that Canada Post either has the right, or is on the verge of having the right, to implement enforcement proceedings and shut them down. Given that it has existed for well over 20 years, we're trying to preserve the status quo.

Now if there were some way of us, as a committee, being able to instruct either the courts or Canada Post or even the minister to hold off on any further legal action until there's further study by this committee, I'd be inclined to follow through on that. I'm advised, though, that there are some legal considerations. If there is actually a court order in place, it may be imprudent for the minister or for this government to actually hold off on enforcement actions. I mean, it's a concern of mine. If there was some way around that, I would be pleased to follow through with that.

I am concerned, because Mr. Bélanger has indicated he may not be inclined to support the remailers. We're talking about a significant industry in Canada that has co-existed with Canada Post for well over two decades. It was only because someone noticed that there was a loophole and a disjunct between the English and French versions that we now find ourselves in the pickle of having a Supreme Court order that says Canada Post has exclusive privilege.

So that's my concern. If someone can suggest a better way of protecting the interests of the remailers, at least in the interim while we resolve this, I'd be interested in hearing it.

The Chair: I want to advise the committee that unless there is a motion to defer it, or Mr. Fast agrees to defer it, we will stay here and continue until this—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I move to defer, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I have people on a list, so I will go through it.

Monsieur Laframboise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: I simply want us to understand each other. Earlier, Mr. Jean told us no one would lose any money. Unfortunately, I was not able to question the CEO, who estimated revenues at \$75 million. Was she talking about expected losses or additional revenues?

I do not want Canada Post to get rich on the backs of the remailers. However, I would not want the \$75 million to undermine the discussions and negotiations on the current collective agreement. I would not want her to say that there was a shortfall of \$75 million because of our motion and that she is forced to cut rural services, etc. I want to make sure that does not occur. I don't have the answers today. I want us to be able to examine that. I do not want it to undermine current negotiations, as you yourself suggested.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I'd be pleased to defer the matter until the next meeting.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ed Fast: This is serious enough for us to give it some proper consideration.

The Chair: Because Monday's meeting is full, I would say we would defer it to another meeting.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Wednesday is not too late.

I wonder whether it would be prudent to advise Canada Post, through the minister's office, that the committee is seized of this issue and that it wants to deal with it before Canada Post does anything.

The Chair: Okay.

We have Mr. Julian's motion.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, it's redundant. Mr. Preuss is coming on Monday. You have already allowed questions related to air safety within the framework of Bill C-6, so we will be permitted to ask questions of Mr. Preuss on air safety.

• (1735)

The Chair: At the next meeting on Monday we'll deal with the minister and the government officials on Bill C-6—

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Chair, is the motion withdrawn?

Mr. Peter Julian: Sorry, I withdraw.

The Chair: Mr. Julian has graciously withdrawn his motion.

The meeting is adjourned until Monday.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.