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(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 15, 1994**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 15, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

**Hon. David Anderson (for the Minister of Industry)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-12, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read for the first time and printed.)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Shall all questions stand?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FIXED LINK

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency)** moved:

WHEREAS section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 provides that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada where so authorized by resolutions of the

Senate and House of Commons and of the legislative assembly of each province to which the amendment applies;

NOW THEREFORE the House of Commons resolves that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by His Excellency the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada in accordance with the schedule hereto.

#### SCHEDULE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

1. The Schedule to the Prince Edward Island Terms of Union is amended by adding thereto, after the portion that reads

“And such other charges as may be incident to, and connected with, the services which by the “British North America Act, 1867” appertain to the General Government, and as are or may be allowed to the other Provinces;”

the following:

“That a fixed crossing joining the Island to the mainland may be substituted for the steam service referred to in this Schedule;

That, for greater certainty, nothing in this Schedule prevents the imposition of tolls for the use of such a fixed crossing between the Island and the mainland, or the private operation of such a crossing.”

Citation

2. This Amendment may be cited as the Constitution Amendment, 1993 (Prince Edward Island).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy that you have read a fair portion of the amendment which we intend to discuss today. The amendment is very specific with regard to the terms of reference between Canada and Prince Edward Island.

I apprise the new Speaker, who has just taken his place in the chair, that this is a very specific amendment. Therefore I would hope that comments all hon. members make have some relevance to the subject matter which we are dealing with and not the broad general topic of constitutional reform.

One hundred and thirty years ago the Fathers of Confederation gathered in Prince Edward Island and created the concept of Canada. Thanks to their genius Canada has flourished throughout the 20th century. Today Prince Edward Island seeks a small but significant amendment to its terms of union with Canada. This improvement will create the opportunity for our smallest province to take its rightful place in the 21st century.

(1010)

On behalf of the Government of Canada I am honoured to place before the House of Commons a formal resolution to amend the terms of union between the Government of Canada and Prince Edward Island which I am certain all members of this House will want to support in the deliberations to follow.

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The amendment, albeit short and straightforward, is important for Prince Edward Island, important for the entire Atlantic region and important for Canada.

The proposed amendment provides the necessary constitutional framework for the replacement of the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick by a bridge across the Northumberland Strait. More significantly, the amendment provides a bridge for the future.

The fixed crossing will allow Prince Edward Island to become a full partner in Canada's economy. The fixed crossing will spur Atlantic Canada's economy in the short term and create real hope for viable long term economic growth.

Construction of the 13 kilometre concrete bridge means new skills, new technology, new jobs, new enthusiasm and new prospects for the future.

The amendment before Parliament today will allow a project to proceed which is fiscally sound and financially responsible, a project which represents thoughtful public transportation policy, a project which sets new standards for environmental review, assessment and management.

The federal government is bound by the 1873 terms of union with Prince Edward Island to provide continuous communications between the island and the mainland.

Since Confederation this obligation has been fulfilled by a ferry service. The province of Prince Edward Island now wishes to strengthen, modernize and improve dramatically the means by which the island is linked continuously with mainland Canada.

For that reason the federal government and the Government of Prince Edward Island signed an agreement committing the two governments to make the necessary constitutional change to permit the ferry service to be replaced by a bridge.

The amendment before us today is the last in a series of legislative steps required to enable Prince Edward Island to make that move forward. In the spring of 1993 Parliament debated and then passed Bill C-110, an act respecting the Northumberland Strait crossing.

I would be remiss in my opening remarks if I did not pay tribute to those members of my own caucus who participated in that debate and on previous occasion whereby the House deemed it appropriate to pass Bill C-110.

I want to congratulate all members, some who are present, some who are opposite, who participated in that debate. I wish to thank them sincerely.

In June 1993 the Prince Edward Island legislature passed a resolution authorizing this amendment. In October an agreement was signed by the federal government and Strait Crossing Development Inc. to begin construction of a bridge linking Prince Edward Island to mainland Canada.

The agreement is an innovative, prudent and intelligent approach to the building of public infrastructure. The agreement breaks new ground in government-private sector partnerships. Investment of taxpayers' dollars is limited but also protected.

The people of Canada will not be responsible for footing the bill for delays or cost overruns relating to this initiative. The total contribution of the Government of Canada will consist of 35 subsidy payments to the private sector development. The payments will be made annually at a cost of \$42 million indexed to inflation.

This formula effectively caps the cost and limits to 35 years the financial responsibilities of the Government of Canada to meet its constitutional obligation to the people of Prince Edward Island.

By contrast, pursuing the option of the ferry service indefinitely would subject the taxpayer to undue and unexpected cost without any reprieve in sight. As was made crystal clear by the Prime Minister both in our election red book and in the recent speech from the throne, the government's number one priority is job creation. The fixed link and this particular initiative will do that. It will create jobs.

(1015)

Under the terms of the agreement, 96 per cent of bridge construction jobs will be filled by Atlantic Canadians. In total over 3,500 jobs will be created in the three and a half year construction period. Further, at least 2,000 indirect jobs will be created as a result of spin-offs. That addresses clearly and unequivocally the government's intent with regard to its priority of job creation.

The contracts also specify that 70 per cent of the total procurement requirements will be provided by Atlantic Canadians. Given the size and complexity of the undertaking, extensive spin-offs will offer Atlantic Canadians the chance to develop new construction, management and environmental protection skills.

What is most encouraging is that the economic benefits will continue to flow long into the future. The tourism industry estimates that once the bridge is in operation, the number of people visiting P.E.I. will increase approximately 25 per cent. It will open up new opportunities for even more employment in the vitally important hospitality industry of that province and other provinces as well.

The Prince Edward Island trucking industry will benefit to the tune of some \$10 million each year in time savings alone. Mr. Speaker, you are very wise and very learned. I have no doubt you are probably a very well travelled individual. If you have taken or perhaps would like to take a trip in the immediate future to Prince Edward Island, you would quickly understand why the trucking association is so much in favour of this initiative. It will decrease the time you will be parked at the ferry side waiting for the boat to transport you to the other side. Not only is it time saving but it is also an economic saving which will

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enhance opportunities and provide many spin-offs for that sector of our economy.

The bridge will provide much greater certainty and reliability of delivery for P.E.I.'s farmers and fishermen. There will be new possibilities of growth for the province's processing and manufacturing industries.

P.E.I.'s businesses will be able to improve their bottom lines. An improved competitive position for the island's economy means an improved future for the young people of the island. I am certain all members of the House regardless of political ideology will want to support that enthusiastically.

Not surprisingly, over the years since the idea of a fixed link was first advanced, support has grown to the point where today over 70 per cent of islanders are in favour of the bridge. I do not mean the people from Cape Breton Island, I mean the people from Prince Edward Island. I wish to make that very clear.

The bridge is an exciting project for Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada. I know that some people still have concerns. I want to do my best to address some of the concerns this morning and perhaps respond to questions that hon. members might have.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitments enshrined in a tripartite agreement made with the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Government of Canada.

The ferry workers who will lose their jobs in June 1997 as a result of the ferry closures will be treated fairly. They will have first choice of employment on bridge operation and maintenance. A fair severance package will be negotiated on top of the provisions of the workers' current contract. We will work closely with ferry employees to find retraining opportunities for jobs in many sectors of the local economy which will benefit from the presence of the new bridge.

(1020)

Fishermen affected by the construction activities in specific areas of the Northumberland Strait will be compensated for lost opportunity. As part of this particular deal the developer has set aside a \$10 million trust fund to be administered according to a plan developed mostly by fishermen themselves.

I also want to reaffirm the commitment to provide financial assistance through another agency which I happen to be responsible for, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, for sound business initiatives in order to help the communities of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick in the coming months and years. We will take the appropriate measures to help the affected individuals and communities because it is the fair and just thing

to do. I cannot stress too strongly that the overall effect of the bridge will be many immediate and long-term benefits. The bridge will contribute to an increasingly dynamic economy for those of us who reside in Atlantic Canada. In fact, the project constitutes a good deal, not only for the people of Prince Edward Island, not only for the people of Atlantic Canada but, I dare to suggest in the House of Commons, for the people of Canada.

In drawing up this agreement the public servants of my department have done a commendable job of ensuring that the taxpayers are protected from any unexpected, unnecessary or unwarranted costs. All of the risks have been assumed by the developer, including financing, design, construction, maintenance and operation.

I know some people, perhaps in this House, have expressed concerns that the ultimate owners of two of the development partners are not Canadian. But I am satisfied that this is essentially a Canadian undertaking whose benefits will largely accrue to the people of this country. It is true that Northern Construction Company and the GTMI company are Canadian subsidiaries of foreign firms, but both subsidiaries have been operating actively in Canada for in excess of 30 years.

I wonder if those critics—and I do not suggest for a moment that they are here on the floor of the House of Commons—wherever they may be, would seriously suggest stopping as it would be rather ridiculous if we were to say to GM, Ford and Chrysler: "Because you operate a subsidiary in Canada, in Ontario, you should not be allowed to operate because your parent company is a foreign one". That would be intellectually dishonest. We are in a globally competitive world. I know members opposite would want to agree with my conclusion that this is important for Atlantic Canadians and important for Canada as a whole.

Furthermore, this particular developer should be complimented for assembling world class technical expertise. The truth is that the proponent of the fixed link, Strait Crossing Development, is a 100 per cent Canadian owned company which happens to be headquartered in Calgary, Alberta. Who will benefit most from the project? The answer clearly is the citizens of Canada.

The developer was required to have all the project costs in trust at the time of closing, plus a 10 per cent contingency until substantial completion of the bridge has taken place. The developer has posted a \$200 million performance bond as well as a \$35 million compliance bond and a \$20 million labour and material bond. All these are supported by guarantees with the parent companies. The deal was struck in such a way that the parent companies are providing the necessary financial backing to the developer.

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(1025)

I want to emphasize that the developer and not the Canadian taxpayers will be fully liable for cost overruns. If the project is not completed by May 31, 1997, the developer must pay the cost of operating the ferry service until the bridge is ready. Once the bridge is in operation the developer must operate and maintain it to the satisfaction of the federal government before having access to the revenues from the tolls.

The cost for crossing the bridge will be comparable to that of the current ferry service. Over the next 35 years these tolls will not be increased in any year by more than three-quarters of the annual rate of inflation. Through these and other provisions the government has made every effort to ensure that taxpayers are properly protected before, during and after construction.

Similarly, I want to make an honest effort to answer all fair minded questions and reservations raised by Canadians about the fixed link. In that spirit I would like to comment on the question of the possible environmental effects of this project.

This issue has been raised throughout the past five years, 60 months. I know it has concerned a number of members of the House. I do not intend to detail all the environmental studies and expert reviews that were undertaken except to say that there were in excess of 100 studies, most of them very comprehensive.

I was going to seek the indulgence of the House and bring before it the six feet of studies that have been undertaken with regard to this project but I thought it would be rather cumbersome to do so. It would be rather costly for the Government of Canada, particularly the House of Commons, to have reprinted in *Hansard* each and every word of all of those studies.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, from your study of the transcripts of this debate at another time, I placed before the House a number of studies. I refer to them not in totality but in summary fashion, bringing to the attention of the House just how important those studies were in answering a number of environmental concerns.

Today I am tabling with the permission of the House a list of all of the studies which have been done, both in French and English. If members wish to refer to them I am certain my department can make these studies readily available so they can examine them, study them at night, take them home on the weekend and review them, maybe get an independent study by their particular political party or their particular group. Then we could hear back from them in the months and years ahead on whether the studies, which number in total 100, were appropriate.

I wish to have the consent of the House to table these two documents if members wish to refer to them at a later time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I am also prepared if members deem it appropriate to bring in the six feet of studies which have been done. If members wish me to do that they might want to indicate it to me with a note and I would be prepared to do that so everyone will understand that there are no secrets, no backroom deals that have been consummated with regard to this project.

I want to say that the project was subjected to the most open and fully transparent public consultation process which involved over 80 public meetings attended by over 10,000 individuals. This is quite remarkable in itself. I believe this project sets the standard of environmental review and will become a model of environmental management for undertakings of similar size and similar scope.

(1030)

There is no doubt and there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that there are Canadians out there who under no circumstances whatsoever would agree to having a fixed link, whether because of the environment, personal bias, personal views, finances or otherwise. However, the vast majority of the people of Prince Edward Island who voted in a democratic referendum passed in their legislature voted in favour of the fixed link. We as a national Parliament must recognize that fact, as I am sure hon. members opposite will want to recognize in their interventions that will fall in line shortly.

In late August the Federal Court of Canada in response to a challenge ruled that the Department of Public Works and Government Services had gone well beyond what would normally have been expected in meeting the federal environmental review guideline order. I will quote from Justice Cullen's ruling when he said:

The criteria accepted and followed by Public Works Canada when making its self-assessment was more than adequate for the purposes and complied with the (environmental) guideline order.

However, I assure the House this does not mean the end of our environmental concerns. My department, as well as other responsible federal and provincial agencies, will continue to monitor environmental impacts during the construction period and beyond to ensure compliance with the agreement and to take action if it should be deemed necessary.

The fixed link is a very exciting initiative, a very bold initiative. It is an undertaking of historic proportions. It is yet another challenging opportunity to open up the country, to unite the country and to build it.

Yes, the 13-kilometre bridge, the longest ever over waters which freeze, is ambitious but so were the St. Lawrence seaway, the Trans-Canada highway and the great Canadian railroad. The

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hallmark of all these endeavours was the determination to bring Canadians one step closer together.

This undertaking demonstrates that Canada has the ability to develop an imaginative approach to government industry co-operation in carrying out a major public initiative: partnership at its best.

I should like to think that the Prince Edward Island bridge project, in addition to its other merits, could serve as a global model for future joint projects of this type. Closer public and private sector collaboration is a major contemporary avenue through which we can stimulate investment and create badly needed jobs.

During the election campaign we heard from every political leader talking about a partnership between industry and government. There is no other better example than the fixed link between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick which demonstrates that point more accurately.

The Northumberland bridge is a very sound and a very important project. The present premier of Prince Edward Island, the Hon. Catherine Callbeck, said:

A tremendous economic boost—that will provide a stable, economic climate for business to survive in this province.

Jim Larkin of the Prince Edward Island Tourism Association remarked that it is “probably the key to the future of this province”. The premier of New Brunswick, the Hon. Frank McKenna, said:

I am absolutely confident that history will favourably judge the fixed crossing to Prince Edward Island—it's time to seize the moment and opt for progress in Atlantic Canada.

Clearly the vast majority of the people of Prince Edward Island sees this bridge as an important initiative which will give the people of the province renewed opportunity to participate in the country's economy, renewed opportunity to enhance their own lives and the lives of their families. The bridge is creating a renewed sense of optimism for Prince Edward Island and for the Atlantic region. A strong Atlantic economy is a vital part of a strong Canadian economy.

(1035)

Atlantic Canadians know within their hearts and minds that the bridge is only one part of the solution, but as Sir Winston Churchill once said: “The chain of destiny can only be grasped one link at a time”.

In conclusion I urge members of Parliament from all political parties and those who are independents to support the amendment before us today. I urge members of the House to create the opportunity for Canada's smallest province, Prince Edward Island, and the rest of Atlantic Canada to become economically stronger. I urge members of the House to give a new generation of Canadians who happen to reside in Prince Edward Island an

opportunity to become full partners in the Canadian economy and an opportunity for a better future.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, we have here a situation that has its roots in the distant past. When Prince Edward Island entered Confederation in 1873, the island had set certain conditions which were agreed to by the federal government and the other members of Confederation at the time, conditions which concerned mainly establishing and maintaining a communications link between the Island and the continent, so that Prince Edward Island could in some way be part of the Canadian community.

At the time, this link was provided by a steam service, which is how it was described in the terms of the union. Over the years, the federal government has met the commitments made in the Constitution, which today represent a subsidy of \$28 million. That is, the original commitment today works out to \$28 million in constant dollars.

My point is that we are not starting from scratch. The province is not asking the federal government to build a bridge starting from zero funds. The government of P.E.I., from a normal desire to adjust to changing times, now asks that the link, formerly provided by a steam service and subsequently by more modern ships, be made more effective and more continuous by building a bridge.

My point is, and this may surprise my hon. friend the minister, who was furiously defending the government's position against the opposition he anticipated from the Bloc Québécois, my point is that the Bloc Québécois takes a very positive view of this project, and it is too bad the minister wasted precious ministerial time and energy which would have been better spent on other issues, since after due consideration, the Bloc Québécois, feels the economics are sound, the financial structures make sense and there is an element of fairness added to the Canadian federation as it exists today.

If we look at the economics, it is clear a bridge will increase economic activity on the Island, that tourism will increase, and by the way, I did not wait for the minister's cordial invitation to visit Prince Edward Island. I already visited the island as a minister at the time, and as a tourist last year. It is a magnificent island, and I know tourism will improve considerably once there is a bridge that provides for easy access at all times. We agree that on the economic side, there is a considerable advantage for the government and the people of Prince Edward Island.

The financial structure is something which the government should monitor very closely. It is true that the financing scheme is quite ingenious. There is no undue burden on the federal government since the subsidy, which it has to pay at any rate and will keep on paying, and which is now \$28 million, will upon completion, in 1997, be \$41.9 million in constant dollars. There

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will of course be adjustments for inflation, but there would be in any case.

(1040)

As of 1997 we are looking at an annual increase of roughly \$14 million which the federal government will have to continue awarding to Prince Edward Island and, given the expected benefits, I do not think it is an exaggerated amount.

We applaud this private sector initiative involving the construction and the operation of the bridge. A word of caution is in order, however. I think that all parliamentarians should demand that the government be extremely attentive and monitor construction activities closely.

I realize that construction will be carried out by a private firm, but it is essential that the government monitor the work closely. What happens if the project goes over budget? This is the point that raises the most concerns. Costs might start to get out of hand. After all, we are talking about a major undertaking, the construction of a 13 kilometre long bridge across a strait in which a great deal of ice forms during the winter. There will be a substantial amount of pressure on the bridge footings. What happens if there are cost overruns?

The documents that we have in our possession do not show what the government's responsibility would be if such an event were to occur. Legally, I believe the government's responsibility is limited to guaranteeing annual payments. However, what would happen if during construction, the private sector companies fell on hard times, financially speaking?

We all know what happened with the Channel. Of course the two projects are vastly different in terms of sheer scope, but the fact remains that constructing a 13-kilometre long bridge capable of withstanding extremely harsh weather conditions is a sizeable undertaking. Has the government considered what it will do if the project goes over budget? It should shed some light on this point and tell us what steps it intends to take to ensure that there are no cost overruns.

Regarding the environment, I am not as familiar with this aspect of the issue as the minister, who clearly has up to date information. Opposition members do not have access to files as readily as ministers. However, when I was Environment Minister, I had sought assurances that a very stringent environmental study would be done. I believe that such a study was carried out and that the minister is correct in saying that the most extensive precautions have been taken.

The government should, however, exercise caution during the actual construction phase because certain operations will affect the environment. The minister has said that he will be taking certain measures, but exactly which ones, that remains to be

seen. Perhaps it would be good to know what measures are being planned.

Consideration must also be given to what will happen after construction is completed and the bridge is in operation. We know that fisheries, particularly the lobster fishery, will be affected and that some form of compensation is planned. I think that during the coming debate, the government should tell us a little more about its plans to provide compensation.

[English]

I will say it in English for our friends in P.E.I. We think this is an equitable measure of progress which should promote the economic development of this province of Canada. That is why we will support it.

[Translation]

I would also like to draw the government's attention to a problem with the drafting of the constitutional amendment before the House. The problem seems to be one of agreement between the French and the English versions.

This could, in my opinion, cause some major legal problems since as we know, following the 1982 amendments, pursuant to section 56, I believe, of the current Constitution, both the English and French versions are equally authoritative.

The same cannot be said for the Constitution of 1982. Despite the commitments made in 1982, we are still awaiting the official, authoritative French version of the Canadian Constitution. In passing, I have one small question. How is it that a country like Canada, which claims to be bilingual, still does not have an official French version of the Constitution? We will get back to that some other day.

The fact remains, however, that this amendment which will be adopted today will be equally authoritative in both languages since the new constitutional system is in place. Looking at the resolution, we see that the English version reads as follows:

(1045)

[English]

“That a fixed crossing joining the island to the mainland may be substituted for the steam service referred to in this schedule”. May be substituted. In the French version we read:

Qu'un ouvrage de franchissement reliant l'île et le continent remplace le service de bateaux. . .

[Translation]

While in English you have something that may or may not happen—the government has the power, the option of replacing the old steam service by a fixed crossing—in French, the government has to do it. There are very significant nuances. I am somewhat surprised that the government's legal services failed

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to pick up such a significant nuance, one that could certainly, under certain circumstances, cause major legal problems.

I do not know whether the government intended to be as formally committed as in the French clause or to have a way out like in the English one. I do not know what they intend to do. Perhaps they should tell us which reflects their true intentions and make sure both versions reflect the same legal reality.

I would like to add that, if this is good for Prince Edward Island—and it is—and if the federal government is able to make financial commitments that I would describe as reasonable to ensure substantial economic development in Prince Edward Island for the 125,000 residents of the island, one can wonder why the federal government no longer conducts this kind of projects which in the past have prompted massively enthusiastic responses in terms of economic development. I am thinking of the HST, the high speed train, in particular.

If the government saw fit—and rightly so—in the interest of 125,000 people to get involved in this major project which we support, it would seem to me that, for the 16 million people of Quebec and Ontario, in the interest of connecting the economic heartland of Canada to the United States, the largest economic market place all of us have access to, it may be worthwhile to look into putting into place a link, another type of link, a railway link, taking advantage of the very high technology offered by the HST as part of the same project.

I will not elaborate on this, as some of my colleagues will address this specific issue, but I do urge the government to go further in the direction it is taking today and to ensure that reasonable, practical and forward-looking major projects are initiated.

Finally, I cannot help but notice that, in response to an obvious need, the government has decided to reopen the Constitution. We know that the Prime Minister and his government are claiming left and right that they do not intend to talk about the Constitution: “We will not touch the Constitution. I have absolutely no desire to touch the Constitution”. It has become a taboo subject, except when there is a need to address this issue.

There is such a need today and the government, in a practical and realistic fashion, has decided to do what must be done. It is no sin to touch the Constitution when it must be done. And, as it must be done, we are supporting today’s motion.

I know that, as far as the Bloc Québécois’s designs for Quebec are concerned, it is not a matter of reopening the Constitution to achieve Quebec’s sovereignty; such a decision will be made democratically in due course by Quebecers themselves. As for the current, very serious debate on native self-government and the extremely pressing and critical issues being raised, I think that the leader of Canada’s First Nations, Mr. Mercredi, is right

in saying that the Constitution should be reopened in this case. We think that, if the government can accommodate this economic need in the case of Prince Edward Island, it should also fill this more urgent, political, social, even ethical need to take steps that will, in the long run, solve the native problem.

We cannot go on like this, as we are experiencing numerous repercussions in every respect. First of all, from a social standpoint, the sad picture of what is happening in some reserves, the extreme hardships suffered by the people should be enough to convince us that we need well thought out instead of piecemeal solutions and that the demand for native self-government in a framework and under conditions that are appropriate should be submitted to the government, which should respond with the same realism it is showing today in recognition of the need to establish a fixed link between Prince Edward Island and the mainland.

(1050)

I would like to conclude by appropriating an argument invoked by the minister. The minister, perhaps thinking that the Bloc Québécois would oppose this measure, urged us not to raise objections and to respect the will expressed by the people of Prince Edward Island in a democratic referendum. He made a pressing, emotional appeal to respect public opinion as expressed in a democratic referendum.

We are in total agreement with the minister today and we will ask him to stand by his words in due course, if and when Quebec makes the decision we are hoping it will make.

[English]

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this constitutional resolution under section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 to amend the Prince Edward Island terms of union in the schedule, sections 1 and 2. The purpose of the resolution is of course as stated, to allow the substitution of a bridge for a ferry.

This particular resolution comes from a government committed to not open the Constitution, to not even remotely discuss constitutional questions. At least that is the position as we have understood it. But is it really its position to act that way?

Already this is the second constitutional amendment being passed since the defeat of the Charlottetown accord. It is in addition to a number of extra constitutional measures that are either being taken or being considered, such as aboriginal self-government or federal-provincial division of powers and overlap and duplication.

Therefore the position that we are not going to talk about or amend the Constitution or deal with constitutional questions seems increasingly to be restricted to one particular issue, which is the Senate. When it comes to the Senate we will not discuss

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the Constitution directly, indirectly or even hint at it, but everything else appears to be on the table.

Since we are talking about the Constitution today, I will use this opportunity to discuss some of our concerns on the Constitution. I am sure some of my colleagues will do the same. I want specifically to discuss our position on the Senate and on some of the reforms that could be made to the Senate, particularly outside of the constitutional context.

Of course, the House is well aware that our party supports a triple-E Senate. We believe the Senate should be elected, it should be fully effective, it should have full veto powers over legislation, and it should be equal. It should have equal representation from every province.

This particular amendment attempts to update the Constitution, to recognize that things are different today from what they may have been in 1867. To substitute a bridge for a ferry seems reasonable. Why not then recognize that certain political and institutional realities are very different today from what they were in 1867?

To recall our constitutional history, in 1867 the Fathers of Confederation established a parliamentary system consistent with the political theory of their time. That was the political theory dominant in the 18th and 19th centuries, a very different kind of theory from what we have today. They established a Parliament that would have three parts: the crown, and in particular two effective legislative chambers, the Senate and the House of Commons.

This model was common and still is common in most of the world, particularly the anglo-American world. The United Kingdom has the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The United States has the Senate and the House of Representatives. Even in our own provinces at that time we generally had two legislative chambers. We had the legislative councils and the legislative assemblies. In all provinces the upper house has now disappeared, although traces of it remain in Prince Edward Island.

(1055)

An effective upper house in 1867 was one that was not elected. That is very different from the view we have today, a very different theory of representation, a very different theory of government. I will not get into that at great length.

Suffice it to say that an upper house had several features in Canada and elsewhere. In particular the principal historic function of an upper house had been to represent the propertied classes. Under section 23 of the Constitution Act, 1867 there were important and the very high property qualifications for the time of \$4,000 for membership in the Senate.

There were also other important functions the Senate of Canada was designed to fulfil. It would be a chamber of sober second thought. In other words it would fulfil the function of checks and balances seen in many constitutional arrangements, not just in Canada but in other countries. Sober second thought was the term used. As I pointed out to some audiences the use of the term sober was probably not entirely accidental during the time of our founding prime minister.

In that regard the Senate had important characteristics that reflected that function. Generally speaking it could not originate bills, certainly not money bills; they came and still do come from this Chamber. As a chamber of sober second thought the appointments were lifetime. People were selected. A very different kind of person was expected to sit in the Senate from those sitting in the Commons. We find that under section 29 of the Constitution Act, 1867.

A third function of our Senate originated in recent history in the United States. That is the protection of the partners in the federation and their role in the federation.

Certainly the Constitution of 1867 did not establish an equal Senate. I concede that. However it also certainly did not, explicitly did not, establish a Senate based on representation by population. It established a Senate where there would be three regions or what are called divisions under section 22. At the time that was a very good reflection of the regional balance of power within the country. The provinces of Ontario and Quebec which had been recreated by Confederation were constituted as regions and the two maritime provinces together were constituted as a region.

Consistent with the theory that the Senate was not elected, unlike the United States the members were not appointed by provincial governments but were appointed by the cabinet, the executive. The cabinet or executive in that era was expected to be much more diverse in a partisan sense than we see today, much more diverse in a regional sense, and much more diverse in the sense of personality and importance of the various senior ministers.

The original Senate was selected by a government in which party lines were not as clear as they are today. The government itself was constituted of people of different political persuasions and the Senate was picked in much the same way. That practice has of course changed a great deal.

The Senate was intended to be and was a highly effective body in political terms. It had full legislative powers which remain in the Constitution Act today. It had real power in cabinet and in the legislative process. Five out of 13 or 30 per cent of the original cabinet ministers were senators. Today it is one out of 30. It would shock many Canadians to learn today that two of our prime ministers came from the Senate. They held their prime

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ministership in the Senate rather than in the Commons. Of course in Britain it was quite common at that time for a lord to be prime minister as well as a member of the Commons.

(1100)

Diversity and important political figures were present in the Senate at that time, right from the beginning. The principal Liberal leader of the day, George Brown, was appointed to the Senate after he failed to secure representation in the election of 1867.

Things have changed. Today we have a fuller and more democratic theory of government than we did in the past and effectiveness of the Senate, as with any other political body, requires that it be elected. This is not just a phenomenon of the Senate. I would point out that the House of Commons, as constituted in 1867, would not be remotely considered democratic today. We will talk on another occasion whether this House of Commons is effective and truly democratic. I will leave that to a later date.

In 1867 members of the House of Commons were elected but only by property holders, only by those over 21 years of age, only by those who were male. In some provinces of Canada, in some parts of Canada and at certain times in our history, elections were restricted by racial considerations.

We would never for a minute suggest that would be an appropriate way of choosing the House of Commons today or an appropriate composition for the House of Commons and so we have modernized it. We have modernized the House of Commons but not the Senate. Why have we done that? I will put it in very simple and blunt terms. We have modernized the House of Commons because it is the power centre of Ontario and Quebec. We have not modernized the Senate because it was intended to be the voice for the other regions that have not fared as well in Confederation.

At the centre of this argument I would only point out to my constituents and to those who are watching today the Ontario and Quebec alliance that will shove through this particular constitutional amendment.

It is interesting to see in this century what has happened to upper houses, not just in the anglo-American world but across the world. Those houses that were built mainly or almost exclusively on pre-democratic theory have atrophied or disappeared. I think, for example, of the House of Lords in Britain which still exists today but which has largely been stripped of its powers and exists, I suggest, as a relic of another era.

In the case of our provinces, the legislative councils, the upper houses of the provinces, which really had an exclusive pre-democratic function, have entirely disappeared, the last being in Quebec in 1968.

However, those houses built on the concept of regional representation within a federation have remained and by and large flourished as legislative chambers. The Senates in the United States and Australia have become elected bodies and have become very powerful.

In the case of the Senate in the United States we know what happened there. The United States Senate was not originally elected but rather chosen by state legislatures. That manner of selection was gradually broadened and eventually some states began to have popular elections for their senators even before the constitutional amendment proclaiming such a thing had come to pass. The Senate was largely elected by the time that happened.

In Canada the Senate has survived but its modernization has been slow. We have attempted to move along with the development of the theories but at a very slow pace. We have made no attempts in our history to increase the property requirement that defined the early Senate. It still exists on paper but \$4,000 real property is now a modest requirement for many people.

In 1915 we moved to recognize the west. After the west had been in Confederation for about 45 years we decided it was time to formally recognize the presence of the west in the regional chamber. Before that there had been a few senators appointed from various provinces now and again. In 1915 a fourth Senate division was created to recognize western Canada. Since then other representatives have been added in Newfoundland and in the territories.

(1105)

In 1965 we took the step of ending lifetime Senate appointments. We know there are very few lifers but this has been one particular reform.

In 1989-90 we had the election of the first senator, the late Senator Stan Waters, a member of my party, a good personal friend of mine and a ground breaker, as we all had hoped. Just as in the United States, when Senator Waters was elected there were denials from those who opposed Senate election and regional representation, denials that this could happen, that it could not happen, that it was unconstitutional, that it was illegal. There were a million impediments.

It is amazing how things can happen in this country, in any country, in any political system when people want them to happen. It is amazing how many excuses and roadblocks can be created when there is a desire to thwart the principle underlying the action.

Today the minister, to my surprise, spoke about praising the P.E.I. bridge because it had been approved in a referendum. How many times since this House has reconvened have we heard the government speak against referendums and the danger presented in referendums? When the government has an agenda it wants to see go through, a referendum is possible.

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In conclusion, I will certainly not be supporting this hypocritical amendment. I suspect that many of my party members feel the same way. I will not support a selective updating of our federation. I will not support a mentality that says some needs are to be addressed while other needs are to be laughed at or ignored, depending on crass political needs.

Senate reform is important. It is a federalist solution to the kinds of regional problems that plague this country and I would suggest that in my region problems exist that are much more serious than some people here realize. Senate election, which I have spoken on specifically, is a partial solution that does not even require opening the Constitution in order to proceed. It only requires a basic sense of fairness. Without that sense of fairness do not expect the support of myself or my riding or the taxpayers I represent. Do not expect to keep coming to the trough to ask for these kinds of favours when our concerns on these matters are not taken seriously.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gagliano:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to inform the House that from now on, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2), government members will split the 20-minute period provided for speeches into two 10-minute speeches, each followed by a 5-minute question and comment period.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I thank the government whip. Resuming debate with the hon. Secretary of State for Veterans.

[English]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Secretary of State (Veterans)):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand and support the constitutional amendment put forward by my hon. colleague from Cape Breton—East Richmond.

This constitutional amendment will have a major effect in the province of Prince Edward Island. It will start to bring to an end a topic that has been discussed in the province for possibly over 100 years.

This is a permanent link to the mainland. In the 1960s we even started the bulldozers rolling and started the approaches to the fixed link or the causeway, as it was worded at that time. This resolution will clear one of the remaining hurdles to the Northumberland Strait bridge project.

Government has made it clear during the election campaign and in the recent speech from the throne that putting Canadians back to work is the number one economic and social problem facing this country. The number one economic and social problem facing this country is jobs.

(1110)

We are committed to taking every step within our power to support job creation, stimulate economic activity and restore hope and confidence in the future for all Canadians.

Nowhere is this more the case than in Atlantic Canada which has more than any other area of the country suffered too long from high levels of unemployment and despair.

The House is aware that the building of this new bridge to Prince Edward Island will provide a welcome boost to the entire Atlantic economy in terms of job opportunity and increased business activity.

Even more significant will be the long term benefits to the region and in particular to the province of Prince Edward Island. The bridge project represents a long range investment in transportation infrastructure which will almost certainly pay off in increased opportunity and in new business development for the region.

The lack of a fixed and reliable link with the rest of Canada has long restricted the commercial and industrial activity in Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island premier Catherine Callbeck commenting on the issue said recently:

The entire course of P.E.I.'s history has revolved around its isolation from the mainland. The announcement that the fixed crossing will proceed will fundamentally alter the province's relationship with the rest of Canada. In my opinion, that change will be for the better.

The Northumberland Strait bridge project will have an immediate significant impact on the economy of Atlantic Canada in general and in particular on Prince Edward Island. Building the bridge will create hundreds of direct jobs for each of the four years of construction and numerous indirect jobs throughout Atlantic Canada.

Under the terms of the contract between the federal government and the contractor over 90 per cent of the jobs will come from Atlantic Canada.

In an area with high unemployment and needing the jobs, over 90 per cent of the jobs will come from our region. This will provide a tremendous boost for employment throughout the region and will provide thousands of workers with gainful employment and an opportunity to practice and improve their job skills. This will give the tradespeople in Prince Edward Island an opportunity to improve their trade skills.

Direct employment on this project tells only part of the story. The contract also specifies that some 70 per cent of the total procurement requirements will be obtained in the region. These requirements are massive. Thousands of tonnes of cement, reinforcing steel, cable, fabricated metal and manufactured components are needed as well as many other service requirements.

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Given that the total project is in the area of \$850 million the wages and procurement expenditures paid by the developer will inject more than half a billion dollars into the local economy in the next four years, the economy of the Atlantic region, one of the most depressed areas in Canada. This should be a good kick-start to the economy of Atlantic Canada, an economy that certainly needs a boost.

The massive expenditure will also have a ripple effect into the retail and service sectors of Atlantic Canada and Prince Edward Island, providing new opportunities for expansion and job creation in those areas as well.

Given the positive impact this project will have, it is not surprising that the majority of islanders support this project. One sector that will experience a significant boost will be the tourism industry in the province of Prince Edward Island.

(1115)

The tourism industry is absolutely essential to the economic health of Prince Edward Island. It represents a larger share of that province's gross domestic product than any other province in Canada.

The effects of the permanent link on tourism have been carefully studied. It has been concluded that it would result in an increase of visitors from the first year of operation. Some figures indicate about 25 per cent. It will certainly draw tourists to look at this major construction project, this megaproject, while it is being built. It will also draw many tourists to Prince Edward Island and through Atlantic Canada after it is built. It will truly be something to see.

An increase in tourists will have a tremendous and positive effect on the Prince Edward Island service industry such as accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, recreation, local crafts, manufacturing, and all other sectors of retail trade. It will encourage new investment in the Prince Edward Island hospitality infrastructure.

Tourism is by no means the only industry that will benefit from this link. The availability of a reliable, faster and ultimately less costly link with the mainland will certainly make Prince Edward Island agriculture and fisheries industries more competitive and should help them broaden their markets. While the direct benefits may occur to the Atlantic region, it is true that the project represents a good deal for all of Atlantic Canada and all of Canada.

The economic recovery that our government is working for must embrace all regions of the country if it is to be successful. By giving Atlantic Canadians a chance to go to work, to strengthen their transportation infrastructure and to create long-term economic opportunities we make the country stronger.

The most effective way to reduce the escalation of and the need for social spending is to put people to work. That is exactly what the government plans to do; that is exactly what the project will do. It will give workers in Atlantic Canada the opportunity for jobs and help them with their trade skills. It will be a major boost to the tourism industry in Prince Edward Island. It will have a major effect on the Prince Edward Island transportation system because there will be no long waits at the ferries.

The four years and over half a billion dollars that will be injected into the economy are badly needed, along with the link we have talked about in the province of Prince Edward Island for over 100 years.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, earlier my leader described to this House the position of our party concerning this link. In short, the hon. member from Lac-Saint-Jean said he understood the economic requirements the government party is faced with. He also noted that the concerned minister recognized he was bound by the referendum, where the will of the people was made known.

With regard to the link we are talking about today, this 13-kilometre bridge which is going to link Prince Edward Island to the mainland, everyone in this House, and especially the government party, maintains that this project should contribute to job creation and economic recovery, and we agree with that. However I would like to ask the previous speaker, in the absence of his minister, if there will be an unofficial guideline preventing Quebecers and Canadians from Central Canada, that is Ontario and Quebec, from working on this project, something similar to the official policy concerning the Hibernia project, in Newfoundland. We know that Quebecers are systematically excluded from this project. On behalf of Quebecers in particular and Canadians in general, I would like some further information on this issue. Will workforce mobility be hampered by some provision, legal or otherwise, concerning this project?

(1120)

*[English]*

**Mr. MacAulay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I am sure the minister is quite capable of speaking for himself. I am also sure that no project would be handled by public works that would indicate no one in Quebec or anywhere else would get a job.

I have indicated that we come from an area of high unemployment, probably the highest in the country. We need jobs and this project provides jobs in our own area. The point is that we have the work force and we have the project. We would never exclude anybody. The jobs are in the area and the project is there.

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I thank the hon. member's leader for his support for the project. When he comes to vacation in the province of Prince Edward Island he will find it much easier to get there in a number of years. He would be very welcome to go there to work on it or to go there to visit us.

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the minister today for bringing this resolution to the floor of the House. It is a giant step forward for Prince Edward Island, for Atlantic Canada, and for all Canada. It takes Atlantic Canada into the 21st century. I am very proud to be part of the government that is bringing this resolution forward today.

My riding of Cumberland—Colchester takes in the northern part of Nova Scotia and abuts the Prince Edward Island Northumberland Strait. I would like to ask a question of the hon. member who has just spoken. The current ferry that joins Prince Edward Island with Nova Scotia at Caribou and Wood Islands has been a means of transportation for our tourist industry from Nova Scotia for some time. I am wondering what effect there will be when this bridge is connected from Prince Edward Island to New Brunswick.

**Mr. MacAulay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for raising an important point that certainly was an issue for me all during discussions on the fixed link. I mentioned that we would have approximately a 25 per cent increase in tourism. That means more traffic. Without a doubt we will have both the major infrastructure and the fixed link. We will also have the vitally important Wood Islands—Caribou ferry service.

I am very pleased that section 14 indicates that Canada acknowledges the distinct and important role the Wood Islands—Caribou ferry service provides and recognizes that the construction and operation of the fixed link crossing in no way diminish the importance of this ferry service which is a vital link between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest and pleasure that I rise to support the proposed constitutional amendment which will allow for the construction of a fixed crossing, that is a bridge joining Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

We can understand that this project is of particular interest to the residents of Beauséjour, since one end of the bridge will be in their riding, more specifically in Cape Tourmentine. To have access to the bridge, people travelling from Nova Scotia will drive through Port Elgin to reach Cape Tormentine, whereas those coming from New Brunswick will go through Moncton,

Shediac, Cap-Pelé, Port Elgin and Cape Tormentine. Consequently, people using this bridge will drive through our area.

(1125)

As the minister said, this is a major project the likes of which we have never seen in our region before. It is said to be an \$840 million initiative, over a period of three or four years.

This project will of course create employment, probably 900 to 1,000 jobs per year, for a few years. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that my constituents are happy to see this project being approved, for the simple reason that, given the current situation in the province and in fact in all of Atlantic Canada, where the fishing industry is collapsing, especially as regards groundfish, any effort to stimulate employment is welcome and supported. People are particularly pleased because we are told, and in fact we know, that 96 per cent of workers will be from Atlantic Canada, which is not to say that workers from other regions will be excluded. You realize of course that people from our region will do their utmost to be hired for that project.

We are also told that 70 per cent of supplies will be provided by contractors from Atlantic Canada. For that purpose, the economic commission for south eastern New Brunswick has hired one person, with the support of ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, who will be responsible for providing local contractors with all the necessary information to offer their services.

I followed the development of this project because the construction of such a bridge has been the subject of discussions for many years. In fact, an overpass as well as an access road were even built at the end of the fifties when there were already talks of building a fixed link between PEI and New Brunswick. Indeed, such an initiative has been discussed for a long time, to the point that people in our community were wondering if this was only a dream. It now seems that the dream will finally come true, and we certainly hope so.

This project may have been in the offing for a long time, but it was also developed very cautiously. A series of public meetings were held to inform Atlantic Canada residents on the building techniques and to reassure those who had concerns about the environment. And I can tell you that a lot of people and groups did raise concerns about the environment. I want to say that my constituents and myself are also very concerned by this aspect.

I do share that concern but, at the same time, I am confident, considering what I heard and all the studies which were done. The minister was not exaggerating when he said that all those studies could make a pile six feet high. Indeed, a lot of studies were done and those are public documents to which everyone can have access. So I am certain that all precautions have been taken to ensure that the environment will be protected.

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(1130)

I also know that all work on the construction sites, on the New Brunswick side or on the Prince Edward Island side, will be governed by strict procedures, both on land and on the waters of Northumberland Strait.

The workers will have to follow strict procedures supervised by a committee responsible for ensuring that all environmental precautions are taken. It is rather reassuring that the contractor and all subcontractors must control their procedures and respect the environment.

Of course, even if we take every precaution, some groups might be affected, and I am thinking particularly of fishermen here. In order to give these groups some protection, especially fishermen, including those who fish for scallops and lobsters, who will be most affected, a committee has been set up to implement a compensation program. From the very beginning, that is what we have demanded, citizens, fishermen and local associations alike: that a compensation program be set up before work begins so that those people would be compensated for their losses if the fishery were damaged.

Although the final mechanism has not yet been determined, a committee of fishermen, fishermen's association representatives and officials is studying this problem.

When I spoke of lobster fishermen, the people of Cape Tormentine will be the most affected first because a way will have to be cleared across the strait where construction will go on and the fishermen of other communities away from Cape Tormentine, like Murray Corner, Aboiteau, Cap-Pelé, Shediac and up the Northumberland Strait to Cocagne, Buctouche and even as far as our area could feel the effects from the construction. I do not think that these effects will be considerable, at least I hope not, but if they were affected, we will certainly have a mechanism in place to compensate them.

I spoke only of lobster fishermen, but there are also scallop fishermen, since scallop banks will be affected by this bridge construction.

*[English]*

There is a group that will be directly affected by the construction of this bridge. That group is the families of the ferry workers who will lose their jobs after construction of the bridge is completed. Right now there are over 400 workers and the bridge will provide about 60 or 70 jobs. I want to reassure those people and members of the House that every effort will be made to offer to those people directly affected a proper compensation and training package in order to minimize the effects of the loss of jobs when the bridge opens. I have been in communication

with Marine Atlantic. It has started discussions with the unions to try to put a program in place to minimize those effects.

(1135)

I certainly offer my assistance in any way to make sure that the jobs available once the bridge opens are offered to those ferry workers and to make sure that those unable to get a job receive a proper compensation package.

*[Translation]*

In conclusion I support this project. I support it because it will create jobs and give new impetus to the tourism industry. Of course, my colleague from Prince Edward Island just said that Prince Edward Island's tourism industry will develop as a result. I am pleased about that, but we in Beauséjour, by offering tourism facilities like the land of la Sagouine, which you know well, Arboiteau Park, which is now being developed, and other projects under consideration, will try to attract visitors either on their way to the island or on their way back. We will invite them to spend a few hours or a few days with us.

*[English]*

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, I concur with the hon. member that we have given great consideration to minimizing the environmental effects and the disruption to our fisheries, to guarantee as much as possible that this project is of worthy consideration and is first class for this day and age.

Having said that, when talking about retraining or providing job security for those who will be displaced, it has been brought to my attention during economic development discussions with municipalities in my riding that perhaps we could take our training programs to the job site. As these men and women are working on the new project they would be given the opportunity for upgrading in literacy and computer skills, those kinds of things that take them to the next job. Has the member given any consideration to this in manpower training programs?

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and question. Let me assure her that we will make every effort to ensure that all governmental programs, those of the local associations as well as those of the government itself, will be made available to the workers in order to encourage them and help them find a job both during the construction stage of the project and once the bridge is finished, through the opportunities that will be generated. Every effort will be made to ensure that this project brings about the maximum benefits possible.

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the amendment to the Constitution and the building of that bridge. I think it will promote tourism considerably. I have had the opportunity to visit Prince Edward Island; it is one of the

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most beautiful islands in the world, and I have seen a good many countries.

(1140)

But I question the job creation aspect of that project. In the medium term, it will certainly create jobs, but in the long term, there will be job losses considering that each year some 400 persons work on the ferry and in five years those 400 jobs will be reduced to about 50. Did he study that aspect of the issue? What alternative does he propose? Did he consult the unions?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I know the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs has found the 10-minute period too short. I simply want to remind him that the question and comments period is still shorter. Therefore we would appreciate a brief comment.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members from the other side for supporting this amendment and also for supporting the project as a whole.

Unfortunately, as the member mentioned, some of those now working for the ferry system, maybe I should say many of them, will not find a job on the bridge.

As I mentioned during my speech, Marine Atlantic, the company which operates the ferry system, has already contacted the unions in order to find ways to minimize the impact of the bridge opening and help those people find other jobs.

Of course, local communities and economic commissions are trying to develop tourism and that could create jobs for the ferry workers of today. But I can assure you that every effort will be made to help these people adapt to the new situation so that they can find other jobs.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, even though we basically agree with the government, our comments in this House prove that its approach differs vastly from the one members on this side would use.

Regardless of whether we support this project or not, we are concerned by its potential impact on the environment. It seems to me, at first glance anyway, that the government is not very well equipped at this point to answer the many questions and solve the numerous problems which might arise from the project in front of us.

First of all, I must say that after listening this morning to the minister, I was rather shocked to hear that he had assumed, even before being aware of our position on the matter, that the Official Opposition would oppose this project, at least, that is the impression he gave in his argument. It is rather odd. I wonder how he came to the conclusion, even before we had a chance to express our views on the topic, even before the beginning of this debate, that we would oppose this project.

He may have forgotten, or perhaps he never listened to the Official Opposition when we pledged to Canadians that equity and fairness in distribution would be the yardsticks by which we would measure proposals submitted to this House. The minister might have forgotten that, unless he just never was aware of it. Let us give him the benefit of the doubt, but let it be a lesson for him in the future. The minister should never again presume to think for the Official Opposition, especially given the fact that he seems to have enough trouble trying to understand the issues he is presenting to this House. He does not have all the answers, he has to do more work on these issues, and he should get on with it. The opposition will do its job, and the minister should do his.

(1145)

I must say I was pleasantly surprised when I heard our friends opposite say they have the greatest respect for the results of a referendum held in Prince Edward Island that revealed that the citizens of this province were very interested in the project, were very much in favour of it and considered it a major step forward. I think respect for the will of the people as expressed in a referendum is very important, and I would remind our hon. friends opposite that this should apply to all referendums that may be held in this country and that may have important consequences for the future of its communities.

My own major concern is for the environment. I understand the reasons for the project, and I support it, and I understand what it means to the people of Prince Edward Island, but I have some very real reservations, especially in connection with the issue of ice formation. I am not an expert, but I am told that a major accumulation of ice near the bridge at certain times of the year might alter the ecology of the area and possibly have a major impact on the fisheries. I believe the government has recognized this by providing, if I am not mistaken, a \$10 million relief plan to help fishermen who work in the area make the transition to other work. This means the government is aware of a significant impact on the fisheries.

I am one of those who are very concerned about this kind of situation, and I would have liked to see the environmental issues researched more thoroughly. I am concerned. I know that one case has already been brought before the courts. A number of rulings have been handed down, and the court has had a second chance to rule on the quality of the environmental studies. But I must say that a project of this scope, which may have a very significant impact—and one does not have to be an environmental expert to understand this—it seems to me that the whole environmental question should have been researched more carefully in order to get more answers and more clarification. I still have a number of questions about this project. There are definitely negative sides that will affect the future of a number of fishermen. There may be a negative impact on climate and

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perhaps on certain social aspects as well, as a result of these major changes.

In any case, I think that instead of hurrying things along, the government should dig a little deeper and be in a position to give us better assurances that these issues have been given the attention they deserve. If there are any problems with this bridge, it will not be the people from Ontario or Ottawa, or Montreal or Vancouver who are affected, but local people, in an area that is economically fragile and has a low population density. Yes, a megaproject in this sector may have some very positive effects if the project is a good one, but it might also have a negative impact if we do not bother to look at all sides of the problem because we are in too much of a hurry to get this on the road.

(1150)

As for the environmental issues, I think they were disposed of a bit quickly. I have a feeling that we tried to meet this deadline by putting some pressure on the stakeholders. For the time being, what I want to do is register my concern in this respect.

Financing is the biggest concern for this project. The cost of this bridge—which is clearly a megaproject—is estimated at \$850 million. It would not be the first time that on a project of this magnitude, and for which we have no precedents, there would be cost overruns.

Already, according to my information, a study by Wood-Gordon revealed, last year, that the cost could be about \$1.3 billion. Today—faced with a rather innovative project for which experts have already said that the cost could be at least 50 per cent higher—how can we say with any degree of certainty that the cost will be \$850 million?

I do not want to use this argument to block the project, but I am trying to point out to this House, the government and the hon. members on the other side, that it would not be the first time in this country that the cost of a megaproject balloons way beyond the government's initial estimates, and that the government is stuck with the deal and forced to pay, at taxpayers' expense, millions of dollars more to finish the project.

I do not think that we can conclude this debate without the minister being present, and he is not in the House right now.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I wish to remind hon. members that it is our tradition not to make any comments on the absence of a member. We all know that hon. members are very busy. I just wish to remind hon. members that they should not comment on the absence of another member.

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, I am willing not to mention the absence of the member but I would like to know if someone opposite can answer the questions that we are asking.

If the issue is worth debating, it would be important to have a valid speaker to respond to these concerns. Let me remind you that the role of Parliament is really to allow members of Parliament to express opinions on projects.

I think that the motion before us today is aimed at seeking the co-operation of the opposition parties. A number of speeches that were made until now are asking for that support. That support is being given, but—and this is important—the people responsible should at least try and respond to our concerns.

I agree not to mention the absence or presence of a member, but I certainly wish, and I know I am complying with the Standing Orders, that someone could give us an answer and listen to us in order to be able to give details and explanations on this matter.

Therefore, I will go back to the financing issue. It would not be the first time in this country that a project costs more than expected. How does the government intend to finance cost overruns, if any? I suppose that a responsible government has thought of something. If this is the case, I would like to know about it and we would like to know who will take over the responsibilities if the project is a disaster in terms of construction. It is important for us to know that.

(1155)

Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate that there was a time when the financial situation of the government was sound and perhaps those questions were less important. But when the government is preparing to cut social programs and health care programs, or any other program for that matter, because money is tight, because our deficit is over \$40 billion a year, we have reasons to be concerned with this issue at this point. Surely the government has thought of some way to overcome cost overruns, if any, and they have to explain what their intentions are.

We are also concerned with maintenance. I did not come across any estimates in the documents made available to us. They probably exist, but I did not find them. I would like the government to answer the following: What are the estimated costs for the maintenance of this structure each year? Would the costs be paid for by the consortium that will be in charge of bridge management? Have any maximum costs been established? If the maintenance costs are higher than expected or if there are major problems, who will pay the tab? Will the government take some responsibility then or will the promoters deal with the unexpected costs and other potential risks? It would be important to know about that.

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Although it is not the same type of structure, one knows that a bridge built over salt water is likely to be subjected to more damage than elsewhere. Therefore, the maintenance costs are likely to be proportionate to the location of this bridge, to the fact that it is an extremely long bridge located, one has to admit, in an area with a very harsh climate, in the heart of the gulf of St. Lawrence and subject to significant weather and climatic variations. It would therefore be useful to be given all the information regarding the responsibility of the government with respect to maintenance costs or in case of possible major structural failure.

These are matters which require some clarification. This project economically is so very important for this region. We must therefore ensure that it is a success in terms of both its construction and its operation.

I know that my colleagues opposite agree that it must be a success. But it is not enough to say it. It is not enough to say that we want it to be a success in terms of its construction and its maintenance, to be a success in social and economic terms, to be a success for the company that will be in charge of its operation, also for the government which is going to be watching people coming and going and which, with this structure, is going to link an isolated province with the continent. We all want that project to be a success in all those respects, but again, it is not enough to just say so.

The government must act in a responsible manner. It must give all the necessary explanations. It must look for every aspect, even the smallest one, which may be a problem or about which people may have concerns in order not to embark, once again, on an unending adventure which finally will result in all Canadian taxpayers paying for something which does not even work properly.

A lot of questions have been left unanswered. I think it is for the House, during this debate, to answer them.

(1200)

In conclusion, I would like the people mandated by the minister to answer all those questions. Like my colleague from Bourassa, I would like to express my concern over the possible job losses—nearly 400 jobs, roughly 350 jobs—that this project entails, since the bridge's operation will not require as many employees as a ferry service.

I can understand why so many discussions were held with so many people. Before a company closes shop, there are always a lot of discussions between manpower centres, economic development corporations and other stakeholders, in order to find alternatives, retrain employees, etc. Such a situation results in a significant reduction of net employment in the area, where needs are great.

There is no assurance that the people will easily adapt to the necessary social reorganization because of job losses following this negative change. Will the bridge create a positive spin-off in terms of job creation for the residents of the Island and of New Brunswick? Maybe. We hope for the best but it is far from sure and I see a lot of ill defined areas in the whole employment issue. The government would do well to look more closely into it in order to come up with better answers than it did up to now.

[English]

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick comment on the member's speech.

First, there appears to be some confusion between him and the Leader of the Opposition on the environmental effects and the satisfaction on this. I trust that they will straighten out this apparent discrepancy.

I would also like to point out that many of the questions which he wished to pose to the minister were in fact replied to in the minister's address. I do not know whether the hon. member was here at the time. Perhaps he was talking to a colleague. However, many of the questions that were raised were, as I understand it, from at least a failure to appreciate what the minister was saying.

The hon. member mentions the absence of the minister. I would like to point out that almost immediately behind the minister sits his parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for St. Boniface. I believe it is important for all members to recognize the tremendous support that ministers receive from their parliamentary secretaries. These members accept additional responsibilities and do a tremendous job, particularly on detailed questions such as the one the member put.

While I do not wish to build up the hon. member's performance to levels of high expectation, we fully expect all questions of this type to be very carefully analysed and dealt with by the parliamentary secretary.

I have a parliamentary secretary sitting just behind the member for St. Boniface and she is of immense help in debates such as this in dealing with questions. When she speaks on such questions I want it known, just as when the member for St. Boniface speaks on such questions, that these people are acting on behalf of the minister. In fact, quite often they speak more eloquently than ministers. We are very happy with the support that is given.

I am sure the hon. member will want to correct the impression given that somehow the parliamentary secretary is not able to handle the questions he put. I know full well that when the parliamentary secretary rises to speak we will have a detailed and careful analysis of the questions. The hon. member I am sure, being a man who is very fair in his approach in the House, will find the answers extremely acceptable.

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It is important to point out that if at any particular moment the minister of public works happens to be out of the House we can rest assured that the presence of his parliamentary secretary backstops very well that absence. The same is true in my case. I was away from the House yesterday on business in Vancouver and I had absolutely no compunction in leaving everything related to my department in the hands of my parliamentary secretary who, as I mentioned before, is a person whose skills and ability I have high regard for.

I trust the hon. member will recognize there are ministers in the House from time to time but we have full confidence in the ability of our parliamentary secretaries. If the hon. member was not here to hear the minister and thus had questions about what he did not hear, we would be—

(1205)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I wonder if I could ask the co-operation of the House on the issue of the absence and presence of members. As we all know the demands on everyone's time are of such a nature that all members are not able to be in the House at all times. I know we would want to extend that respect to one another.

I believe the minister had concluded his remarks. I will now ask—

*[Translation]*

Does the hon. member for Roberval want to add something to the comments of the Minister of National Revenue?

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, when a cabinet member hears what he wants to hear, then there is certainly reason for concern.

Remarks that were never part of my speech have just been attributed to me. I never said that the parliamentary secretary was unable to answer questions. Never. Is that what the minister understood? Such behaviour in the House on the part of a minister is cause for concern. I never said any such thing. But I did raise many questions to which the minister was unable to provide explanations in his speech.

The Minister of National Revenue has just told us that the minister has answered all questions asked by the hon. member. Either the minister hears only what he wants to hear or we are facing a problem as far as interpretation or understanding is concerned. There is definitely a problem.

My questions deserve answers. If the parliamentary secretary can answer them, he has only to rise and do so. That is why, considering how time is important in the House, I nevertheless spent 20 minutes to question a project in a reasonable, correct, appropriate and parliamentary manner. I do not want people to

say that I agreed to a project when I really had reservations. I did agree to it but at the same time, I did ask for explanations from the minister. There is nothing wrong with that. This is typical of debates in the House, and I would appreciate a more serious follow up, instead of having someone put words in my mouth.

I cannot understand the minister's approach and, when I look at his answer, I wonder if he understands it himself.

*[English]*

**Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's 20 minutes and to the speech given by his leader.

They acknowledge that this is an amendment to the Constitution and with glee seem to recognize the government's recognition of the referendum that occurred on the island and the importance of it.

They seem to be setting this discussion up as a precedent for something. What I did not hear them speak about is the message the minister gave about the importance of this fixed link not only for the people of P.E.I. but for all Canadians.

I would suggest to the hon. member that if they are looking at this discussion today as a precedent for something, they should remember that it is important that things discussed in this House be for the benefit of all Canadians. I would suggest that some of the initiatives which the hon. member might be suggesting in the future will not be for the benefit of all Canadians.

I believe that the direction of the party and its focus on solidifying Quebec may not be for the best of all Canadians, nor in fact for the benefit of all Quebecers. However I hesitate to speak on their behalf. I would like to recommend that to the member and have him remember that when the minister was speaking about the importance of this fixed link, he focused on the value for the whole country.

(1210)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely flabbergasted. I can hardly respond to what the hon. member has just said, that is, that the results of a referendum on an issue which she considers of national interest should be binding but that those of a referendum held on an issue she does not consider to be of national interest should not have the same value nor should they concern this House in the same way.

**Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint—Paul):** True.

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, I hear comments to the effect that this is true. That is quite serious. If, for the other side, respect of the democratic process—

**An hon. member:** We have to listen to this?

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**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Indeed, you do. If, for the other side, respect of the democratic process is important only when it suits their purpose, Mr. Speaker, then it is time they say so.

I think that, in our country, the results of a democratic consultation should always be binding whatever the consequences. If, on the other side, there are members who think that the results of democratic consultation should not be binding when they do not serve their political interest, then I would urge them to discuss it with the Prime Minister. They seem to have a problem within their caucus. I am not sure the Prime Minister would be proud if he knew that his party members plan to apply referendum results only when they suit them. We take notice of that.

[English]

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address this amendment, secure in the knowledge that the construction of the fixed link is part of the government's program. All that remains is passage of the resolution to amend the terms of the union between P.E.I. and the Dominion of Canada.

I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, the minister of public works. He has been a longstanding advocate and promoter of Atlantic Canada and he earned the gratitude of the vast majority of P.E.I. residents with his strong support for the construction of the fixed link. I have been a supporter of the fixed link since day one, having voted for it in the plebiscite in 1988.

For all members present, I would like to clarify a topic which has just been addressed by the hon. member for Roberval and two other members of the House. Prince Edward Island never had a referendum on the fixed link. Prince Edward Island had a plebiscite on the fixed link. There is a distinct difference between the two. A referendum is binding in law. A plebiscite is not binding.

Premier Ghiz wanted to test how the people of Prince Edward Island felt about the construction of a fixed link. Therefore he called for a plebiscite. It was not binding on him to continue no matter what the result was. All he wanted to do was test public opinion to see whether he should go ahead. If the people of Prince Edward Island at that time had said they did not support the fixed link, he was prepared to endorse the voice of islanders and not proceed.

There was never a referendum taken of the people of Prince Edward Island on the fixed link. If any member opposite or on this side believes it was the case, it never was.

Since the House gave approval to the project last June 15 in Bill C-110, my decision to support the link has been reinforced. Even though link construction is really only in its infancy, one can feel a sense of hope and optimism permeating the island

community. An official in the construction industry had said that the link is not just an economic boost, it is really the only game in town.

I realize that on P.E.I. support for the link was not, is not and probably never will be unanimous. When the plebiscite was held in 1988 the results were 60 per cent to 40 per cent, approximately. Since then support has grown steadily. Recent estimates indicate that it now ranges in the area of 75 per cent to 80 per cent in favour of the fixed link. Every effort was made to provide forums for legitimate opponents of the project to lay before the legislative committee their reasons for opposition.

(1215)

During the House of Commons legislative committee hearings last March we went to great lengths to promote a balance in witnesses between the proponents of the fixed link and the opponents of the project.

Over 200 new members in the House did not participate in the debates of the 34th Parliament when we passed Bill C-110 which enabled the project to proceed. When the legislation was enacted here we had already gone through the questions raised by the member for Roberval and other members. They are all in the records, whether in the legislative committee record or in the House debates of last March, May and June. Many of the questions being raised today have already been debated and answered to the best of our ability. If hon. members would like to read what transpired in the House when Bill C-110 dealing with the fixed link went through, they should do so.

Today we are mainly concerned with amending the Constitution. The legislation to build a fixed link has already passed. I can understand the curiosity and the questions hon. members are coming up with today.

As I said earlier, despite local opposition in some quarters support among islanders has continued to grow. We are here today to deal with the final legal obstacle, a court ordered constitutional amendment which would allow a fixed link, a bridge, to replace the steam service guaranteed in P.E.I.'s original terms of union. We were ordered to do this by Madam Justice Reed in a 1992 decision.

I want to remind the House in the strongest possible terms that the Government of Prince Edward Island has already endorsed this amendment and has done so unanimously. The federal government, the Government of Prince Edward Island and the Government of New Brunswick have endorsed the project. In effect it is saying yes to Atlantic Canada.

Because of the inefficiencies of the present ferry system the project will allow the federal government to fulfil its responsibilities to provide an adequate transportation-communication service between P.E.I. and the mainland. The project will allow P.E.I. to share in the transportation vision which opened up other

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parts of Canada to growth and development. The project is reflective of the spirit of our federal state.

This is why I am happy to be here today to speak one more time in support of the project. The history of the idea and the development of the concept of a fixed link have been discussed at length and are matters of record. So too are the numerous debates and studies conducted in relation to the particular project. As I said earlier we went through the whole process last spring and early summer.

Since this is the case I want to move to the primary purpose of the debate today, that is to amend P.E.I.'s terms of union, and put on record the original clause. The original terms of union state:

That the Dominion Government shall assume and defray all the charges of the following services—efficient steam service for the conveyance of mails and passengers, to be established and maintained between the island and the mainland of the Dominion, winter and summer, thus placing the island in continuous communication with the Intercolonial Railroad and the railroad system of the Dominion.

Today's amendment will provide a fixed crossing, a bridge, as a replacement for a steam service. As most hon. members know we do not have a railway system in P.E.I. any more. We are basically connecting our car-truck service to the roads and highways of the rest of Canada.

It has taken over 120 years and over 90 studies to bring about a change that is already providing benefit to Atlantic Canada. In 1988 the Government of P.E.I. crystallized the issue by holding a plebiscite. The positive results of the plebiscite provided the stimulus which brought the concept of the link to reality. The numerous studies and actions taken subsequent to the plebiscite have addressed the concerns of the people and the governments involved.

(1220)

It is time to recognize that the project makes immense good sense. It has united business and labour in Prince Edward Island. It has brought political opponents together in common cause. In the previous Parliament the Conservative government was basically sponsoring the legislation and the Liberal Party at the time joined with the government in supporting it.

The organization, Islanders for a Better Tomorrow, spear-headed support for the link and deserve credit and recognition for its efforts. This group and all other link supporters believe the project is of tremendous importance to the future of P.E.I. and Atlantic Canada. It will provide an opportunity for P.E.I. to establish itself as a key player in a revitalized economy in Atlantic Canada. It will be an opportunity for our province to be recognized for other things than its small size, equalization payments and potatoes.

The naysayers have raised questions about the environment, the fisheries and the ferry workers. The courts have ruled that all reasonable measures have been taken. Any potential adverse environmental effects of the specific bridge proposal were either insignificant or mitigable with known technology. In the fishery an agreement has already been reached which will provide compensation to fishermen for any disruption or loss of access during the construction period.

Discussions for ferry worker compensation are under way. This booklet will tell us exactly what moves we are making toward the ferry workers on retraining, job opportunities, early retirement and so on. That will all be developed over the next number of years to address the concerns of the ferry workers, which is a very important aspect of the whole discussion.

The scales are heavily weighed on the positive pro-link side. Economic activity will grow. It will grow during the construction period and it will grow in the years afterward. The link will generate experience and create jobs. P.E.I. has a desperate need for jobs.

This is the biggest infrastructure program ever undertaken in Atlantic Canada. There will never be an opportunity as great as the one we now have. It is time to get on with it.

In that vein I want to close with a quote from Rob Matthews, business editor of the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* and the *Mail Star*, in his column of February 4. In part he said: "The issues have already been studied sufficiently for elected and appointed officials to decide the crossing was worth while politically, economically and environmentally. There must be an end to discussions at some reasonable point. Sadly valuable projects are often beset by those who want the process to deliver only their solution or, failing that, another process that will. Entrepreneurs and governments have come to understand that someone will object to almost any construction project. These days there is no single body of opinion on anything. It is much the same with public assessments in which the same few voices and personalities vie for the spotlight, unwilling to accept reality or unable to comprehend that action not paralysis brings jobs and development. There are great benefits ahead as a result of the fixed link. The sooner we can attain them the better".

[Translation]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gave his definition of referendum and plebiscite and he underlined that since, in this case, it was only a plebiscite, its results were not binding on the government, which decided nonetheless, as we can see today, to respect the will of the people and go ahead with the project.

I also wanted to talk about traffic. Having travelled several times to Prince Edward Island, I can say that the bridge will no doubt have the effect of increasing car traffic on the island. Everybody knows that to go to the Magdalen Islands, one has to

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drive across Prince Edward Island to take the ferry at Souris. Does the hon. member know about studies on increased traffic that could alleviate our concerns about delays on the way to the Magdalen Islands? Can he comment on that?

(1225)

[English]

**Mr. McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, in reference to the hon. member's question about a plebiscite, the federal government was in no way, shape or form involved in it. The plebiscite was strictly within the province of P.E.I. It was held to give the government, under Premier Ghiz at that time, an indication of what the islanders felt about a fixed link to the mainland. It had nothing to do with the federal government. The federal government was not even remotely involved with the project at that time. It was merely a sampling of public opinion as to what islanders actually felt about the fixed link.

As far as getting to Magdalen Island, which is part of the beautiful province of Quebec, I would think a fixed link would make it a lot easier. The member would not have to wait at Cape Tormentine for any length of time. He could simply drive up, drive over the bridge, continue on his way to Surrey and catch the ferry to Magdalen Island. He would be able to spend more time there once the fixed link was built.

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I have a question of clarification for the member for Egmont who just spoke.

I visited his constituency on several occasions. I find it to be a very beautiful part of our country. I am slightly envious of him in representing that constituency. I know he would be of my constituency as well. I invite him to visit any time he wishes to do so.

I have two points of clarification. The first has to do with the plebiscite. Could the member confirm my recollection that when the plebiscite was held the question implied that perhaps the fixed link could be a safe underground tunnel as much as it could be the construction of a bridge?

Second, I heard him say in his speech that the constitutional amendment we are discussing today has been dealt with in the Prince Edward Island legislature. I was not aware of that. Could the member clarify if the amendment has been dealt with in the Prince Edward Island legislature, including the parts about tolls and possible privatization of the structure?

**Mr. McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. member to revisit Prince Edward Island any time, and all members of the House. It is the best place one could possibly visit in the summertime. I would not want to visit the hon. member's riding

in the wintertime either so I do not expect him to come to Prince Edward Island.

The question on the plebiscite did not include any options. The tunnel was never on the ballot as an option. It was strictly: "Are you in favour of a fixed link?" The people who were bidding for the fixed link considered in the development of a proposal the option of a tunnel. I think they found only one bidder who actually went into the matter of the tunnel to any great depth. Even that company felt it was much too expensive to continue any further exploration of that option and that the most economic option was the bridge option.

It was not considered at all on the plebiscite. The people who did look into it on the construction side and the bidder side felt there were many environmental problems with the tunnel. It was not an economically viable option.

On the member's second question, the provincial legislature last spring passed a unanimous resolution endorsing the constitutional amendment to the terms of union between P.E.I. and the Dominion of Canada. That has already gone through its legislature. It is a resolution only. It was directed, as we are directed today by Madam Justice Reed, that this had to happen before the bridge could be legally used in place of a ferry system.

(1230)

**Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, it is a very great privilege to join in this debate today. It is a particular privilege to follow the hon. member for Egmont who for such a long time has been an advocate in this House for all of the interests of his home province of Prince Edward Island. He has been such an advocate for the establishment of the fixed link.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. It is a delight to have you in the chair. I am sure you will prosper there with all of us to be your sheep, shall I say.

With regard to this debate, in the more than five years I have been privileged to be a member of this House representing a riding in Atlantic Canada, I have stood countless times and spoken on matters of great and indeed of crucial interest to the people of our region. Frequently we have looked at the possibilities of development for employment, development to create a better climate for business, development in the area of natural resources and so on and so forth. We have met walls because of our small population. We have met difficulties because of the problem of distances, as in every region of this country, et cetera.

It is with particular gratification that I stand today to speak in support of the constitutional amendment to enable the building of the fixed link crossing between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

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There are many reasons that this fixed link is a superb idea. Members much more involved from the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have articulated these ideas, but I would like to talk just about one area where I see the fixed link making a difference. It was very interesting that a member questioned my colleague from Egmont about the traffic and about getting to Iles-de-la-Madeleine, which is the area I want to talk about.

In spite of all of the setbacks and drawbacks in Atlantic Canada, we think we really are the most fortunate people in the country. If one is fortunate enough to live in Atlantic Canada, particularly in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island is normally the vacation place of choice. I must say New Brunswick is also, but we like to go to P.E.I. for the beaches, the wonderful golf courses, the great food, the terrific restaurants, and on and on.

I have been visiting Prince Edward Island as a tourist since I was a small child. I have jokingly referred to the fixed link from time to time as the span of Green Gables. That reminds us why young women in this country consider a visit to Prince Edward Island to be practically a religious experience: the shrine of Anne of Green Gables and that great Canadian writer, and feminist I might add, Lucy Maud Montgomery.

I have spent many hours as a child, as an adolescent and as an adult sitting in a car, usually at Cape Tormentine, waiting for a ferry. I remember one particular visit at this time of year. When Joe says he does not want to go to the Battlefords in February he is probably right. However, getting to P.E.I. in February can be quite something too when one is dependent upon the mercy of the ferry in the Northumberland Strait when the ice is in.

There was a meeting. It was the kick-off to a very famous political campaign. The Atlantic provinces student Liberals were meeting in Charlottetown in 1968 to decide whose students would support the leadership of a great political party. A group of us from Halifax headed out for Tormentine. Given that it was February we did pretty well. We arrived there in about four hours from Halifax. We then waited for six hours until the old *Abegweit* could get into the dock. We got on the *Abegweit*. I think normally it takes about 45 minutes to cross in good weather, but seven and a half hours later we landed in P.E.I. It is one thing when it is a group of students. We had a good time on that ferry.

**An hon. member:** I suspect you did.

(1235)

**Ms. Clancy:** Yes, we did. We really did not mind a whole lot the almost seven hour extension of the trip.

I remember we were met on that illustrious morning by one of Prince Edward Island's most famous sons. I refer to Premier Alec Campbell as he then was and who today is Mr. Justice Campbell of the island's supreme court. Premier Campbell was not very happy on that day. He knew the ferry had been frozen in

the middle of the strait for over seven hours. He took the opportunity to make a public speech right there and he got a good crowd, as island politicians usually do. He spoke about the fact that the ferry really did not fulfil the constitutional agreement to create a proper link and a proper mode of transportation to and from Prince Edward Island.

That happened 26 years ago this month. I remember it very well. Consequently most of my subsequent trips to Prince Edward Island have been by air or in the summertime, but I have never forgotten the passion with which Premier Campbell addressed this issue.

I discussed this issue on many occasions because, as the member for Egmont can tell you, I was not a total convert to the concept in the beginning. The member for Egmont, the Secretary of State for Veterans, two other premiers of Prince Edward Island, Premier Callbeck and former Premier Ghiz, and the present member for Malpeque have all had a part in convincing me that this is absolutely the right thing, not just for the people of Prince Edward Island, not just for the people of Atlantic Canada but for the people of Canada. It will create the access we need and deserve to get to the cradle of Confederation, one of Canada's unique beauty spots.

Members who have been here for any length of time know and new members will learn very soon that being members of Parliament gives us a very privileged sense of the country as a whole, as a unit from sea to sea to sea.

To go to Charlottetown and see where the fathers, sent by the mothers, of Confederation first met to discuss what would happen in 1867 gives one a very particular and very warm view of what the politicians of the day were struggling over, arguing over, negotiating and deciding to do for Canadians then and now. Young Canadians from the other nine provinces would benefit from visiting, seeing and spending time in the cradle of Confederation. I agree that we would all benefit, young people in particular, from seeing all the parts of this magnificent country.

Tourism is one of Prince Edward Island's major industries and we certainly do not see people staying away because of the ferries. However, as we enter a more modern age heading toward the year 2000 it is only sensible to ensure that access to that province be done in the most sensible, safest and time saving way. That is why those of us in this House from the province of Nova Scotia stand in great support of our colleagues from Prince Edward Island and in great support of our colleagues from New Brunswick.

Another thing I would like to bring to the attention of the House is the fact that this fixed link is going to create an incredible number of jobs. In the provinces of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the creation of jobs is something every one of us is committed to and I can only say it is with an almost spiritual fervour. We do not like to be considered

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the poor relations of Confederation. We do not like to be called the have not provinces.

(1240)

This fixed link will create an economic boom and an advantage to business and tourism. I am in favour and I say three cheers for those who decided to go ahead with the fixed link.

**Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague, the hon. member from Nova Scotia.

As the member for Central Nova, the issue of the fixed link is one of major concern in my riding. It is recognized that the Northumberland bridge, the fixed link to Prince Edward Island, is a link to economic opportunity and progress for Prince Edward Island and all of Atlantic Canada. This link will create job opportunities for Atlantic Canadians throughout construction of the bridge and maintenance thereafter. It will create opportunity for tourism and economic progress.

However in my riding of Central Nova some concerns have been expressed regarding competition between the fixed link at one end of the island and the ferry service at the other end. The employees of the ferry service rely upon this means for commercial and domestic transport and for carrying tourists from Caribou to Wood Islands. The shipbuilding industry and Steelworkers of America Union rely upon the building of new ferries and the maintenance of those existing for their livelihood.

I wish to reassure the people of Central Nova that the competing interests between one end of the island and the other and competing interests between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia along with the competing interests of construction workers, ferry workers and shipbuilders can be very readily reconciled.

The fixed link will create employment opportunity as well as tourism opportunity for all of us in Atlantic Canada. It will in no way diminish the importance of the ferry service running between Wood Islands and Caribou. The continuation and upgrading of the ferry service between Caribou and Wood Islands will create opportunities for tourism and economic progress in Central Nova and for the province of Nova Scotia.

Therefore on behalf of the people of Central Nova I support the motion put forward this morning by the hon. minister of public works. I thank my learned colleague for her comments.

**Ms. Clancy:** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member from that great riding of Central Nova which for the first time in many years boasts a member from the Liberal Party. I congratulate her on her election and on her comments this morning.

In talking about the benefits of the fixed link to tourism I was remiss in not particularly mentioning the Caribou–Wood Islands service. It is essentially a summertime service and is also a great boon to tourism. The ferries on that line are built in the shipyard in Pictou county and all of us want nothing more than to see this line continue. It too is a wonderful way to travel between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to get the benefits of two of the most beautiful places on earth, that is Prince Edward Island and Pictou county.

I know when the hon. member speaks with her passionate devotion to the people of her area they can be assured of the safety of that line and the continued interest in both the use of that line for tourism and business. The two access points to Prince Edward Island, to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia can work very well together in harmony and to the benefit of all Canadians.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East):** Mr. Speaker, in May 1873 the government of Sir John A. Macdonald passed an act admitting Prince Edward Island to Confederation. A month later his cabinet approved an order in council which also promised the “efficient steam service for the conveyance of mails and passengers to be established and maintained thus placing the island in continuous communication with the intercolonial railway and the railway system of the Dominion”.

The provision of that order in council has now become part of our present day Constitution. The promise has been kept for 121 years. Today it is the intention of both the federal government and that of Prince Edward Island to change the wording of the clause but not the promise itself, thus committing the federal government to a fixed link instead of a ferry service.

(1245)

At the outset I want the House to note the intention of our forefathers. Their intent was obvious. They were clearly intending to obligate the federal government to keep the island in continuous communication with the mainland. The mode of transportation by ferry was also specified and the federal government wishes to confirm that same intention. However, today it wants to specify a different mode of transportation.

The Reform Party of Canada does not wish to argue that a bridge would not be beneficial to Prince Edward Island. Common assent to the plan has been given by provincial plebiscite and resolution.

The fixed link has weathered protests by environmentalists and engineers who argue that the bridge will be unhealthy or unsafe. It has endured bad press, public dispute and court challenges and now all that remains is to change this clause. No one argues that the bridge will mean more prosperity for the maritimes and increased economic development for Prince Edward Island in particular.

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The principle of a bridge replacing a ferry is not the substance of our complaint today. The Reform Party wants nothing but increased prosperity for all of the maritime provinces. However, the federal cabinet should not pass an Order in Council today to change this clause. To alter it today requires an amendment to the Constitution, that document foundational to our nation, the instrument which defines our political system and, more specifically, defines the nature of the relationship between provinces and the federal government.

I address two different audiences today. To the audience in Prince Edward Island, I understand why it needs this bridge or why it wants it. It will be good for that province and I think there is widespread public support in Canada for the bridge.

To my second audience, the Government of Canada, what it is attempting to do in this House today is both incorrect and unwise. Allow me to explain what I mean.

The Government of Canada is proceeding under section 43 of the Canadian Constitution which reads:

An amendment to the Constitution of Canada in relation to any provision that applies to one or more, but not all, provinces—may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General.

The government assumes that it can safely proceed under this section because it also assumes that this issue relates only to the federal government and two or three provinces. Is this really the case? Could it be true that the provision of a fixed link to Prince Edward Island involves all the provinces of Canada, not only the maritime provinces? I submit that although this amendment does not apply directly to every province of Canada, it affects every province in an important and substantive way and therefore the government could be acting improperly.

If changes are necessary at this time, it should proceed in a fairer and more conventional manner by way of section 38 of the Constitution, a section which at least attempts to involve the input of all Canadians.

How are other provinces involved? This venture is a shared cost venture and these costs are not shared between just one province and the federal government. The subsidy which now operates the ferries is taken from the federal government's general revenue. Who contributes to the federal treasury, all provinces or just a few? All provinces are involved today in subsidizing Prince Edward Island's ferries and we are happy to do so.

However, the estimated cost of the bridge, \$850 million and climbing, will also be borne in some fashion by all members of the federation because the federal government will subsidize this bridge to the amount of \$43 million per year for the next 35 years. This is not an insignificant sum. This kind of significant commitment requires the approval of all Canadians.

However, there is an additional problem. The government through a constitutional amendment will continue to commit itself not just to the fixed link but to the original intention of the clause written in 1873. That intent is to place the island in continuous communication with the mainland.

What if problems are to develop? What if the bridge suffers cost overruns of more than 10 per cent? Another member indicated that it may double. Other projects around the world such as the tunnel under the English Channel or the Hibernia oil project nearby have experienced vast cost overruns. We all know the appalling record of past federal governments in this regard. We will be committed to a bridge no matter what problems occur.

What if, God forbid, this bridge should collapse? The government will be constitutionally obligated to rebuild it. The question I am asking here is a serious one. By constitutional amendment all members of the federation will be committed to providing a fixed link with the mainland forever.

(1250)

If the bridge is rendered unusable for periods of time during the winter or encounters other major problems, the intent of the constitutional amendment will still stand. Continuous communication with the mainland will have to be maintained by the government. In other words, if the fixed link proves unworkable the government will still have to provide a ferry service.

Speaking outside of constitutional law, the government could not allow an entire province to be cut off from the mainland for very long. A ferry would have to be provided if the bridge proves to be unreliable. If it comes to a disagreement and finally to law, the people of Prince Edward Island could demand a ferry service through the courts if necessary.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean noted the ambiguity between the French and English versions of this amendment earlier today when he mentioned that in one version it says they may and in the other it says they will. That is still unclear. It is a moot point. We will be obligated and in this case we will be obligated to this continuous communication.

In that case the cost of this constant communication with the mainland would effectively double. This is a much greater commitment than the government would now have us believe. This is a significant commitment that every province in Canada deserves to address through a resolution under the current constitutional arrangements by each legislature under the authority of section 38 of the Constitution.

Although it is clear to me that the government is acting incorrectly, perhaps unlawfully and certainly unwisely, I do not propose a legal remedy. Constitutional change should never be forced on the nation in the name of expediency. If the government insists on proceeding in this manner, there is a simple resolution which lies in the decision of the Federal Court of Canada given in March of last year. Madam Justice Reed there

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indicated that a discontinuance of the ferry service must be sanctioned by a constitutional amendment. We agree to that. She gave the House of Commons no direction as to the wording of that amendment in the form of a resolution.

If the government must go ahead with this change, and I repeat many of us feel this is not the way to go about constitutional change, it should reword its resolution to reaffirm the constitutional intent to provide constant communication with the mainland but to despecify the mode of transportation required. To be very clear, the amendment would promise a continuous link with the mainland, period.

In this way the government would have a free hand to choose the least expensive transportation option in the future while still carrying through with its plans for a bridge today.

Here the Government of Canada would not be committing all provinces to provide a fixed link for all time and at any cost, and under no circumstances could Canada be legally obliged to provide a bridge and a ferry service at the same time.

Although this legal argument is significant, it does not form the basis of our objection to this resolution. Our objection springs from a root that goes far deeper than a simple legal technicality. The Constitution of Canada defines the relationship between provinces and the federal government. The amending formula is the way to redefine or to change these relationships. If we redefine these relationships we must be careful to do so in a way that shows consideration for all parties. We show consideration to all parties in order to preserve good will between them. Countries are not built on technicalities. They are built on relationships. Those relationships, especially in this period of Canada's history, must be preserved at all costs or the federation is lost.

The Reform Party of Canada envisions a better process for our nation, one that preserves national relationships and respects the wisdom of individual Canadians, one that provides popular ratification of constitutional change in a bottom-up process, not a top-down process like we are experiencing here again today, in which each concerned Canadian can participate in constitutional conventions and finally have their say through a referendum.

This government is proceeding today just as it might have 50 years ago when it would simply pass a resolution to ask Britain to change the BNA Act. This process is no longer acceptable to Canadians.

I think of the case of the Roman Empire. At the start of every major undertaking they would pray to the god Janus. Janus was a two faced god who looked into both the past and the future. They hoped to be guided by this god who would say: "These are the

mistakes we made in the past and we will not repeat these as we try to guide our nation forward into the future".

(1255)

That god passed into the history books along with the Roman Empire but we can learn from that concept. When it comes to constitutional change, if we ignore what we have gone through in the past few years as we plan for the future, we are making a serious mistake in the House of Commons.

The Canadian voter is no longer tolerant of politicians who fall victim to what we describe as Ottawa fever as soon as they are elected. This disease results, as we have talked about before, in selective hearing, poor memory and the inability to discern the common sense of average Canadians. Ottawa fever killed both a government and a national party just a few months ago. Has this government learned from the mistakes of the Conservatives?

I have a genuine fear that this House and this government are embarking on a legislative program, including these constitutional changes, that shows that they have the early symptoms of Ottawa fever.

The finance minister talks about filling the loopholes and broadening the tax base in the upcoming budget. He puts a pretty spin on an ugly subject by saying that Canadians want to increase equity in the tax system, which is just another way of saying that the government wants more out of the taxpayers. This is at a time when taxpayers are pleading with the government to stop gouging them and start listening about cutting some expenses.

On another issue, many voters, especially the voters of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville, are demanding the right to recall MPs but their appeals fall on deaf ears. We cannot see any movement on this right to recall. Why is that? Why is it that no one is listening to that?

Now we see this government promising also an ill-defined aboriginal self-government even after the Charlottetown accord was soundly rejected by Canadians. How is that possible?

This government is running far ahead of the voters. It may even be in a different running lane, I am not sure. The House needs to stop pushing only the government's agenda and start pushing ahead with the people's agenda.

Is it any wonder Canadians have a negative attitude toward governments in general? If the government will not listen to Canadians and cannot put its financial house in order, how will it possibly deal with wisdom regarding constitutional issues which form the foundation of that house?

The Constitution has been the focus of much needless hurt in our nation. It started with the patriation in 1981, a unilateral action which caused the rancorous constitutional conferences of the mid-eighties. These led to the political disasters of Meech Lake and the Charlottetown accord. Out of them emerged the

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Bloc Quebecois and a full-blown separatist movement that threatens to split our nation in two.

Today, what do we find? Yet another amendment to the Constitution, virtually free of national debate, unfettered by consultation with anyone with Prince Edward Island, slipped under the noses of parliamentarians as if the last decade simply disappeared. It appears that the government has learned nothing from the mistakes of the past.

Not only that, but the government conveniently ignores the voices of millions of other Canadians who have said through their votes and through other mechanisms that they are demanding other changes to the Constitution, changes that they say are at least as important, possibly more important, than these.

We have long advocated changes like a reformed Senate, entrenched property rights over which there is already a lot of general national agreement, positive changes such as a constitutional ceiling on government spending, something that would ensure that undisciplined politicians could never again spend our children's inheritance.

Last year the ousted Conservative Party barged ahead with a constitutional change for New Brunswick, just after that very change was rejected as part of the Charlottetown accord. Reform voted against it. Now we see this government forcing us to accept changes on behalf of Prince Edward Island. Reform once again rejects the process that ignores the cries of millions of other Canadians. This process should be a source of shame to this government.

This small amendment is no small matter. It deals with an enormous principle. It brings back memories of how our Constitution has been mishandled over the past 15 years. The Reform Party of Canada opposes this amendment on three firm grounds. The first I went over at some length earlier in my presentation. It is simply unwise to glibly approve a permanent, unqualified commitment to the bridge.

(1300)

The second ground is that of consultation. To satisfy voters and preserve the relationships of the federation, the government should proceed in a way which allows input from every province and, through a referendum, every citizen.

The third principle is that of common sense. It says: "First things first. We ought not approach the House lightly on such weighty subjects. There are other important constitutional issues that could be and should be dealt with at the same time".

To sum up, the Reform Party would be very pleased if one day at the end of a proper consultative process the House dealt with a

balanced package of positive, popular constitutional amendments that included perhaps a re-worded amendment for the benefit of Prince Edward Island.

Today the Canadian people expect to participate in the most important decision that the House can make. It is foolhardy to push their patience once again regarding constitutional change.

I would therefore ask the Prime Minister to reconsider the process by which this decision has been brought to the House. I urge all members to carefully distinguish expedient choices from choices that are motivated by a concern for the future, a search for wisdom and a love for your country.

My concerns and the concerns of each of our constituencies deserve more of a hearing than a few short speeches given to a basically empty House.

This is not mere housekeeping legislation we are considering. Any changes we make now become a permanent part of our Constitution. The obligations we shoulder today will weigh on our grandchildren a century from now. Surely this law should not be sandwiched between bills on excise taxes and port operations. This process trivializes the Constitution of Canada, the foundation of our nation.

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, just a comment then a brief question to my hon. colleague opposite.

I did not hear the full extent of his remarks but I did pay particular attention to some of his wording. If I quote him incorrectly I hope that he will do the honourable thing and advise the House that I have done so.

The hon. member made reference to this creeping into the House of Commons and somehow the guillotine will come down fairly soon on a decision which is of gargantuan importance to Canada, to the world and to other planets if you will. I am paraphrasing of course, but I understand the hon. member is new to the House. However new to the House does not give you the right to flagrantly abuse—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I know the minister is a very experienced parliamentarian and that he would want to direct all of his comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, as I was making my point through you to the hon. member, it does not give him the right to abuse flagrantly and selectively some of the discussions which took place in this Chamber not more than a year ago. He suggested in his remarks that somehow this evil thing that we put before Parliament today was concocted, if you will, in the back rooms. It has been around for five full years.

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I cannot understand why the hon. member would try to give that impression to his constituents. Perhaps we might wish to have a recall of the hon. member's ability to remember all of the facts and all of the things that have gone on in this House.

The question I have for the hon. member is the following. Does the hon. member not think it appropriate that the people of Prince Edward Island, who over 130 years ago decided that they would become a part of Confederation, have now determined through the most democratic way, namely a referendum, that they wish to amend those terms of reference which they consummated over 130 years ago? Is the hon. member saying to Canada's smallest province, to that group of individuals, that they no longer have that right as other Canadians in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and across this country have that right?

(1305)

Is the hon. member suggesting in a code that because one comes from a small province, because one comes from a small population base, one does not enjoy the rights that other provinces have? Is that not what the hon. member is suggesting?

**Mr. Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I was moved. I do not know what it is that the minister seems to get so apoplectic about every time I speak. This is the second time he has become so vociferous in his attack on me. I am not exactly sure why.

If I could address the points he raised I will go through them and try to remember them all. He said that I should not use selective memory in my remarks concerning last year's discussions but that I should think back to the extensive discussions.

What I was trying to emphasize during my presentation was that I have not forgotten the extensive consultations of last year. I have not forgotten that other members of the House, including every other party but—not the Bloc perhaps—the Reform Party of Canada were in favour of the Charlottetown accord. The Reform Party of Canada was in tune enough with the Canadian people to know they had rejected it wholeheartedly.

I was not dissociating myself from that discussion. Of course, I remember that and so should the hon. minister. Of course we want all discussions to be out in the open. Of course we want things to be decided through a referendum. When it comes to recall, if the minister thinks I am nervous of being recalled I invite him and his government to bring forward recall legislation at the earliest possible moment and we will put it to the test. It will not happen here.

It will happen first of all in Markham. I am convinced of that. As a matter of fact I expect thousands of people to come out to the rally tonight to determine that. If the minister wants to bring

that kind of legislation forward, he will have widespread support on this side of the House. I am starting to get a little wound up myself but I mentioned it clearly if the minister was listening to my speech.

I am not opposed to the idea of a bridge. The bridge may be a wonderful idea but to cherry pick your way through the constitutional orchard picking a cherry here, a cherry there, with the government deciding what it wants to do even if it has no support among the Canadian people at large. If there is going to be constitutional change the people want to ratify it themselves. They proved that during the Charlottetown accord. They will not accept anything less. If the government wants to check on the pulse of the Canadian people, do not be afraid to go to a referendum. The people will give it the answers it requires. They may well approve this change. I hope they do but the process must remain, involving all Canadians. If it does not it has no support from the Reform Party. I believe it has no support among the Canadian people.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has a selective memory. He should realize and understand that to suggest this is cherry picking with regard to constitutional reform is utterly wrong.

The Government of Canada, the Government of Prince Edward Island as well as the Government of New Brunswick signed a tripartite agreement. In order to consummate the agreement they duly signed after appropriate consultations with their constituents. After a referendum in the province of Prince Edward Island, the Federal Court of Canada stated it was necessary for that document to have full legal effect not only for the short term but for the long term to change constitutionally the terms of reference affecting the province of Prince Edward Island and the Government of Canada.

It is quite one thing to stand in one's place and accuse the government of the day of cherry picking on constitutional reform when it is the exact opposite. The court is saying clearly and unequivocally, if you wish to give long-term legal effect to a binding agreement duly entered into in good faith by three separate parties, you should and must make a change in terms of the constitutional reference. That is the rationale.

(1310)

I am surprised that the hon. member, who is quite adept on his feet, would not be cognizant of that important fact. That is why today in this legislature, as some time ago in the legislature of P.E.I., this constitutional amendment had to be put forward in order to give legal and binding effect to an agreement duly entered into by three different provinces and the Government of Canada.

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**Mr. Strahl** Mr. Speaker, I know the minister mentioned that he did not listen to all the earlier speeches. Perhaps this is the part he forgot.

I did mention that Madam Justice Reed's decision demands a constitutional change. I did not argue with that either. However, we are talking about process. Constitutional change affects all provinces and all Canadians when it is the foundational document that guides us. We cannot say it only affects Prince Edward Island. The federal government is obligated for \$43 million and change a year or maybe more. It involves all Canadians.

It is why we have talked repeatedly of the need to approve constitutional change through a national binding referendum. I am not afraid of referendums. The government has talked several times about referendums and how it enjoyed the referendum process in P.E.I., how it was a positive process and how it involved people and how it has grown from 60 per cent support to 70 per cent support today. I applaud it and I applaud the people of Prince Edward Island.

I am saying not to be afraid of consulting the Canadian people on constitutional matters. When you ask for their opinion they will give it to you as they did in the Charlottetown accord. They will give it again. If it is properly presented with a bottom up consultative process they will approve the necessary changes. They would probably approve this one. It is the process and the process is wrong.

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, unlike most of the members opposite I have listened to today, both from the Bloc and from Reform, I would like to do something interesting and actually speak to the motion that is on the floor of this House.

**Mr. McGuire:** That is a good idea.

**Mr. O'Brien:** I do not want to talk about the Senate. It might be a neat idea if we actually spoke to what the minister has put before the House, the actual motion that is up for debate and not hear threats from members of the Bloc about a referendum that is looming in their province and their opinion or use this, as has been done by several members of the Reform Party, to argue about the Senate and the need for constant, daily referendums.

We had a very decisive referendum on October 25, 1993. The Canadian people spoke very clearly about the vision they have for this country. They spoke so clearly that the government has had to occupy some seats on the other side of the House. Let us not be under any illusion about the authority of this government and of its ability to act.

I congratulate the minister for his cautious review of this project. It was very thorough as he explained the entire Northumberland Strait bridge. I applaud and congratulate him for the restraint he has shown in the face of comments from members

opposite which have, quite frankly, been largely irrelevant and very much off the topic.

I stand in my place today as a member of Parliament from Ontario, from the riding of London—Middlesex, to speak in favour of the motion. It is disappointing for me to hear members opposite, particularly the member for Calgary West who spoke earlier today, expressing very parochial views of regional self-interest. This is not a time for the narrow, petty objections we have heard so much today. It is a time to build this nation, not to tear it down. This is not an issue of the west versus Prince Edward Island or Atlantic Canada. This is a major project of national significance. Certainly it is going to benefit the province of Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada. If it benefits that part of Canada then we all benefit and I am proud to support it.

As Liberals we are the only truly national party in the House at this time. Perhaps that is the reason there is a national perspective from this side and a very regional and limited perspective from the other side, be it from Bloc members or from Reform members.

(1315)

We have heard this silly argument that if we are prepared to reopen the Constitution in this matter then indeed we have to be ready to reopen the Constitution on any matter. To advance that in this House as a serious argument is highly ridiculous. This is a technical amendment to the Constitution. It was ordered by a judge in order to make the project possible. It is a far different situation from reopening the entire constitutional nightmare this country went through over the past several years.

Frankly, my colleagues on the opposite side are making irrelevant comments or certainly are groping to hang their own particular hobby horse on this motion.

I would like to speak to the motion as it is before us. The government has used a very open and transparent process to build this bridge. There have been massive public consultations. It has been one of the most democratic processes on a major decision to be made that this country has undergone, yet we are still hearing objections.

There is a partnership in place with the private sector to build this particular project. The development company assumes the majority of the financial risks. The whole of the Canadian public will benefit from this particular project. The SCIDI will own and operate the bridge for some 35 years. It speaks very much to the idea of partnership our government put forward in its red book which was so heartily endorsed by the Canadian people.

The process has been very open. The theme is a partnership with the private sector. Obviously there are myriad economic benefits to be achieved by this project.

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The Canadian people voted for a government which recognized the need to create jobs in this country. That is what the message was in October 1993. This project will create a number of badly needed jobs. As was stated earlier by the minister there will be 3,500 jobs over three and a half years in the construction of the project. There will be another 2,000 spin-off jobs once the project is built with fully 96 per cent of these new jobs to be filled by Atlantic Canadians.

I could be parochial and strictly take care of the needs of southwestern Ontario or address them in my comments today. I do not think that is my role as a member of Parliament. We have heard too much of that petty approach to politics today in this House, not on this side I might add but from members opposite, unfortunately.

We have to look at this as an important project to a part of our country which badly needs an economic boost. I am going to support it and I am pleased to see it will do so much for employment.

The project will also show an increase in tourism of some 25 per cent. One can readily understand the spin-offs in jobs that will create in the service sector as Canadians find it easier to get to Prince Edward Island. I have had the opportunity to visit that beautiful island as I hope have many other members and I intend to go back. It will be a pleasure to cross on the bridge.

Concern has been expressed about the ferry workers and the loss of their jobs. This is a worry for all of us. I am pleased that the minister in tabling his statement has shown very clearly there will be fair treatment for the ferry workers. They will have the first choice for employment on the bridge project. There is a fair severance package to be put in place for the displaced workers. As we speak consultations are under way with the unions to make sure this takes place.

We have heard some concerns raised about the environment. One of the few relevant comments from the other side addressed the issue of the environment. However it totally ignored the fact that a comprehensive environmental review has taken place to make sure this project is environmentally sound. In fact a federal judge ruled that the government has taken great care in meeting the criteria of the federal environmental review.

(1320)

Frankly, there is no evidence whatsoever that there is any serious environmental concern with this project. In fact the over 90 studies on the environmental aspect alone reached the opposite conclusion, that the project is environmentally sound and that it will have no significant impact on the environment.

Of course that would include fishermen in the area. It has been acknowledged that fishermen in the area may lose an opportunity during construction to fish certain waters. Obviously they will. In recognition of this a \$10 million compensation fund is to

be established by the developer to compensate these very fishermen.

Again the environmental review has clearly shown that the project is environmentally sound and there is to be compensation for the fishermen in the area whose livelihood will be affected.

We heard about the engineering and safety concerns of this project. The bridge has been designed to the highest standards. It has a life span of 100 years before needing a major retrofit. It has been independently assessed by engineers and found to be very sound.

As the member of Parliament for London—Middlesex, I want to take a national view on this. I invite members from all sides of the House, particularly those members opposite, to rise above petty politics. Find some vision and courage and endorse this project which is nationally important for this country. Let us move forward to the 21st century with the vision that this is our nation, all of it, from coast to coast to coast and that is the way we have to look after it. Let us not try to set up one region against another.

It would be nice to hear the members opposite speak to the motion with a little more national vision than what we have heard so far.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some comments to my hon. colleague opposite—he often refers to us as being opposite—and two questions.

First of all, I found his preliminary remarks mean. He said: “I for one will say something interesting”. It is too bad for the minister who, I feel, said interesting things, too bad for the Leader of the Official Opposition and too bad for the other speakers. It was indeed interesting. Congratulations.

I would also like to express disagreement with what he said about the relevancy of our remarks, and I would like to remind him of the Constitution Act, 1791, which established the foundation for the system of parliamentary representation. The people who elected Reform Party members, or you or us in the Bloc Québécois, know very well that the relevancy of the remarks we have to make in this House depends only on our opinion. On that point also I disagree with my hon. colleague.

I would like to put a question to him. One of his colleagues spoke of a plebiscite in the case of Prince Edward Island, whereas the minister spoke of a referendum. With regard to the referendum, this is the term you used, and we used the term you brought into the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Order, please. I call the hon. member for Terrebonne to order. I would simply remind all members that they should refrain from directly addressing other

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members of the House and that they should put their questions and comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Sauvageau:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

My first question to the hon. member is this: Is it a plebiscite or a referendum that was held in Prince Edward Island?

Is the hon. member's disappointment that great because we support this proposal? Would he like it better if we opposed it? He talks about petty politics and so on, and he seems deeply disappointed. I get the impression he feels that way because we support this proposal. I am right?

[*English*]

**Mr. O'Brien:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to answer the member's questions.

(1325)

First of all, if I might correct his comment, what I said was that as the minister did, I intended to speak to the motion and that I would find that to be an interesting process. I thought this House was all about the process of actually rising in our places and speaking to what was on the floor, without getting into some diatribe about some future referendum in Quebec which has very little, if anything, to do with what we are supposed to be speaking to here today. My earlier comments were that I would try to speak to the motion.

As to the member's questions, I agree with him. I have heard the term plebiscite used in reference to the vote in Prince Edward Island and I have heard the term referendum. I am sure he knows some people believe that to be an argument of semantics, that the terms are interchangeable. There are others who would say no, there is a very real difference between a plebiscite and a referendum.

My colleagues and friends from Prince Edward Island most often referred to the vote that was taken as a plebiscite. It was 60 to 40 in favour of this project in 1988. Frankly I think it is a political science or semantics argument.

As to my disappointment that the member asked me about, no, I was very pleased to hear the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition rise in his place today saying he would support the project. However, I heard Bloc members lecturing the minister about anticipated objections from the Bloc. I was in the House and heard the minister's statement. Not once did he make reference to members of any particular political party and what their views might be. He simply invited support from all members of the House and he hoped that he would not hear particular objections raised.

We are a little tired on this side of these gratuitous lectures and irrelevant comments and that is the source of my disappointment. However, I am very pleased the Bloc has seen fit to

support the motion. It would just be nice if those members would speak to it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul):** Mr. Speaker, one of the extremely positive aspects of the bridge over the Northumberland Strait is that it is one of the first and most important capital projects on which the federal government and the private sector will co-operate closely.

Ten years ago, examples of this kind of co-operation in public works were extremely rare.

For the public and in practice, the distinction between public sector and private sector projects was very clear. One presumed that public works like roads, sewers, energy production were carried out by governments and financed with tax revenues. This perception has changed entirely over the last few years.

In all the industrialized world and at all levels of government, we see private companies and consortiums take on infrastructure work that was previously the preserve of the public sector.

Conditions can change, but the basic principle is that the private sector makes the necessary financing arrangements and assumes most of the risks in exchange for the right to acquire or rent the facility and charge user fees.

It is quite clear that Canadians are also changing their opinion on how we can modernize our infrastructure. According to a recent study by the Canadian Construction Association, for example, close to 58 per cent of Canadians agree that we should ask users of freeways to pay for the construction of a network which is financed by the private sector, instead of imposing a tax on gas or special levies.

(1330)

One of the main reasons for this changing attitude is the alarming debt burden all levels of government are faced with as well as the disgust more and more Canadians feel towards their government, which keeps increasing taxes to finance costly megaprojects. Yet we must renovate our infrastructure, especially in the transportation, communication and energy areas, if we want to remain competitive on the world market.

That is why the principle behind letting the private sector finance and build much needed public facilities is becoming more and more interesting.

Although Canadians generally support this principle, they do have some legitimate concerns about joint participation of the public and private sectors in infrastructure projects. The public wants to be sure it will not be asked to bail out ill-conceived and underfinanced projects. It wants to be sure that private contractors will meet environmental standards. It wants to make sure that the cost will not become prohibitive, once these facilities are put in the hands of the private sector. It wants to make sure that the decisions concerning co-operative projects are made

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openly, in the best interests of the public and not only of the government's friends.

Given these facts, the Northumberland Straight bridge project is of particular interest at this time. During the development of this project, public concerns were carefully considered. The go-ahead was given only after a very open and public review. The deal was signed only after financial soundness was ascertained.

Virtually all the risks associated with the construction and operation of the facility will be borne by the promoter. The fare structure and the appropriate fees will be carefully regulated through federal legislation. Our government is firmly committed to supporting the renewal of this country's infrastructure both in terms of job creation and in terms of enhancing our long term efficiency and competitiveness.

The President of the Treasury Board, who is at the helm of our infrastructure program, publicly invited the private sector to take an active part in this initiative. With this new approach, I think that we have every reason to regard the fixed link project as an excellent model of joint venture implementation and public interest protection. This project has undergone an extremely stringent and comprehensive environmental assessment.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to add a few words to what the minister said about how great the project is with regard to the environment. Much has been written on this issue. For the best part of the five years it took to develop the project, environmental considerations have been the primary concern of both the government and the promoter. Of course, this project has been subjected to the most thorough environmental assessment ever conducted on a project of this magnitude. In fact, 90 analyses were carried out, as the minister pointed out this morning, of the impact the bridge will have on the environment. Ten thousand people from both sides of the strait were consulted, and the discussions were very open and honest. The people have had many opportunities to speak on the requirements of the project during the 90 or so public hearings that were held.

(1335)

The project meets all the technical and environmental requirements.

Let me remind you, if I may, of the result of the last court challenge: the Federal Court concluded that the government's environmental assessment process had been much more thorough than required.

I think that this project will be well received by the people for whom it is so very important that we pay close attention not only

to the technical quality of construction but also to the protection of the environment.

That is also why I am sure that this project will set new standards in terms of public consultation and care for the environment.

I am especially pleased to notice that even if construction has already started, this crucial question will continue to be a central concern for the promoter as well as for the federal and provincial regulatory agencies.

The contractor will have to follow a very strict environmental management and protection plan. The project will be continually monitored to ensure that it remains environment friendly.

I fully support this project not only because it is a good thing, but also because it generates substantial economic activity as well as much needed jobs and, more important, it is environment friendly.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans):** Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons is being called on today to approve or reject a government motion to amend the Constitution of Canada under section 43.

This section enables the House of Commons and a particular province to amend the Constitution on various points which, in my opinion, are very diversified and wide-ranging. It would have been interesting if the Canadian government and the provinces had found enabling procedures for Quebec when it wanted to endorse the 1982 Constitution Act through the Meech Lake Accord, in order to become an equal partner.

During this speech, if I may, I would like to go back to the Constitution, because that is what we are dealing with here, despite the fact that the Prime Minister does not want to talk about it any more. I would now like to raise some issues relating to Bill C-110, that passed third reading in September 1993.

Some Islanders have been worried about the fixed or mobile link with Canada's mainland for many years, ever since Prince Edward Island joined Confederation. Others prefer to keep the island as it is and to lead quiet lives in the country of their ancestors.

Our fellow citizens in Prince Edward Island wanted a link with the mainland so badly that they decided a few years ago to settle this issue in a plebiscite. This plebiscite, held in January 1988, showed that a majority favoured the establishment of a fixed link between the Island and the mainland.

(1340)

No one in the government or the Official Opposition is against the will of the population. But let us not forget that this will is as valid for the people of Prince Edward Island as it is for those living on Vancouver Island, the Magdalen Islands and even Newfoundland, if bridge technology allowed it.

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Unfortunately, there are prerequisites to the implementation and development of megaprojects. Allow me to point out five prerequisites I regard as essential. First, the projects must be carried out legally; second, we must have the necessary financial resources; third, the environment must be protected; fourth, this megaproject must benefit the population and help to create jobs; finally, we must ensure that all Canadian citizens can be treated the same way.

I would like to see if the conditions I just listed are met by this project.

As far as legality is concerned, as I was saying at the beginning of my speech, part of the population, in a plebiscite, authorized the Prince Edward Island provincial government to go ahead with the project. But the other side, brought together in the Friends of the Island Coalition, strongly objected to this project for different reasons. First, the dangers for the lobster and scallop fishery, migratory birds, the environment and the Islanders' tranquillity.

We must not dismiss this group which opposes this project. It applied to the Federal Court, which issued an order requiring the Minister of Public Works to conduct an environmental assessment pursuant to section 12 of the Order in Council in relation to the developer's detailed construction plan, before making any final decisions which may have irreversible environmental consequences.

On April 22, 1993, the specific environmental assessment prepared by Jacques Whitford Environment Consultants for Strait Crossing Inc., at Ottawa's request, was presented.

Although this study shows that this project is not harmful to the environment, as we agree, the Friends of the Island do not accept the decision and have appealed. The Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's decision, which apparently means that the project is now legal, but we must raise questions about its morality. The opponents will watch everything the developers do as they carry out the project.

Now let us talk about the financial resources. A few weeks ago, Canada's national debt passed the \$500 billion mark, not counting provincial and municipal debt. I will be very brief in my financial evaluation. The federal government now pays Marine Atlantic around \$21 million a year for the cost of the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and the mainland. The ferry service is adequate and fits in with the local environment very well.

Several years ago, the federal government announced that it was considering building a fixed link under one main condition: that the costs not exceed the price of the ferry service for the same period. Yet, the federal government is about to give to the private sector an annual subsidy of \$42 million, in 1992 dollars, for the construction and management of the bridge, over a period of 35 years. This represents close to \$1.47 billion, in

constant dollars, for the whole duration of the contract. From that angle, no one can claim that the fixed link project is self-financing. Can Canada afford to spend \$21 million a year, this on top of what it is already paying for the ferry service?

We are not opposed to the principle that Prince Edward Island is entitled to a ferry service subsidized by all Canadian taxpayers. In fact, this commitment greatly facilitated things when PEI joined Confederation; it was an historic constitutional compromise.

We do not oppose the fact that the federal government continues to fully respect this constitutional right, although I must point out that this same government was not as generous in the past when dealing with Quebec's historic constitutional rights. Remember what Mr. Trudeau did in 1982. It is because of episodes like this one that Quebec is irreversibly headed for sovereignty.

(1345)

Moving on to environmental concerns, in spite of all the studies conducted and the approval obtained from both the trial and appellate divisions of the Federal Court, there is no question that during construction and most likely afterward, the lobster and scallop fisheries will be disrupted because of the underwater movements resulting from the construction of a fixed link. The proof is that plans have been made to set aside \$10 million every year to compensate the 240 fishermen affected by the construction of the bridge. We are only talking here about the construction phase. What will happen to the fishery once the fixed link is in operation? Will the government have to continue paying the \$10 million in compensation? Are the fishermen supposed to rely on unemployment insurance to get by? Will they be joining the growing ranks of unemployed fishermen throughout the Maritimes and Quebec?

I would now like to examine the issue of job creation and the benefits to be derived from this megaproject by the residents of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. During the construction phase, more than \$1 billion will be invested and normally, this should result in the creation of temporary jobs and bring about some semblance of prosperity.

Initially, the project backer will have to bring in workers from across North America. This is the case with all megaprojects. Since this is a pan-Canadian venture, we are counting on Quebec construction workers to figure prominently in bridge construction activities. Quebec workers—and there are many of them in my riding of Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans—are known for their skills and willingness to work on megaprojects. Need we remind people that Quebecers worked on some of the largest hydroelectric projects in North America, if not the entire world. I am confident that initially, the unemployment rates in both provinces affected will decline substantially. However, the question we need to ask is this: Does the Government of Canada

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and do the residents of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick want temporary jobs?

The municipal infrastructure program provides for the creation of temporary jobs across Canada, including the two provinces just mentioned, the aim being to get the economy going again. However, we cannot continue to let people dream, and then leave them to fend for themselves when the temporary jobs end. Creating temporary jobs causes no great harm, but eliminating permanent jobs is downright criminal.

Currently Marine Atlantic employs 420 persons on a permanent basis. These jobs have been around since 1917. Upon completion of the bridge over the Northumberland Strait, there will be a net loss of 360 permanent jobs. The company will need only 60 people to operate the bridge. Of course this does not include all the jobs lost in the shipyards in the Maritimes and Quebec, including MIL Davie in Lauzon, which builds and repairs the ferries that connect Prince Edward Island with the continent. What are we going to do with these 360 people? Negotiate allowances? Invest in skills upgrading and relocation allowances, if necessary? That is a problem we will have to consider when we vote on this motion.

I mentioned the loss of 360 jobs, but I did not mention the potential loss to the communities in Borden and Cape Tormentine which will see a significant drop in economic activity. A special development fund of up to \$20 million will be created to help them. However, \$20 million can provide relief only for a limited period of time. Then what will happen to these people? And this amount adds to government spending.

A final criterion: fair treatment of all Canadians. As I see it, we have a mandate to be fair to the people we represent. Although the construction of this fixed link is financed partly by the private sector, the Government of Canada is committed to paying an annual contribution of \$41.9 million in 1992 dollars, indexed for a period of 35 years, which, as I mentioned before, works out to a total of \$1.47 billion.

(1350)

This subsidy enabled Strait Crossing Finance Inc. to obtain financing through a private bond issue worth \$660 million. The bonds have a triple-A rating, the best guarantee that can be given to the banks. Furthermore, the government agrees not to retain from the subsidy money owing from debtor companies in the case of tax default, for instance, so that potential investors enjoy the same guarantees they would have in the case of government bonds.

Once again, I would like hon. members to remember when they vote on this motion, that we were sent here by our constituents to ensure all citizens are treated fairly. If other provinces have a similar request, are we in a position to give

them the same treatment? We do not have to amend the Constitution to have an ultra high speed train in the Quebec–Windsor corridor. One could say the same about giving the Magdalen Islands a new ferry from MIL Davie Shipyards in Lévis. When these items are tabled in the House, we should be as open-minded as we are today about the bridge between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and our decisions should always be based on the five principles I just described.

I want to say that this House should always be very circumspect when deciding how taxpayers' money will be spent. I am convinced that partisan considerations are inappropriate when discussing projects that will be part of our legacy to future generations.

As the Official Leader of the Opposition said this morning, the House of Commons should take into account the democratic choices made by people in a plebiscite or a referendum.

In concluding, I would like to say the Bloc Québécois is always glad to talk about the Constitution.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank my colleague for his speech. I have three questions to ask.

If I understood correctly, my colleague was saying that it was a bad deal. Taking the \$40 million or so which the ferries now cost and using that amount to build a bridge over a 35-year period and then not having any subsidy to pay afterward was a bad deal. That is what I understood. Let him correct me if I misunderstood; that is why I am asking the question.

He also talked about “temporary jobs”. Of course, when you build a bridge, work begins and then it is over. The jobs will not continue once the project is complete. But is it not true that there is still a possibility, a great possibility, I would add, of creating jobs in tourism, increasing trade and so on? Did my colleague forget to mention these jobs that no doubt will be created or does he believe that no other jobs will be created because of this new bridge?

Finally, I find it interesting that my colleague, who in a way attacked the project, also said, “Let us be open-minded, because when other projects come up, like one for the Magdalen Islands or others that might benefit Quebec, we should be generous”. Listen, I want to be generous with you, but I would like you to be generous in this case too.

**Mr. Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the member for St. Boniface that I noted the three points. In the first one, he says that apparently I find it is a bad deal. I do not know if you were here at the beginning of my speech.

**Mr. Duhamel:** I was here and I listened.

**Mr. Guimond:** You were? Great.

I said that I stand with my party; we are for the project, but I simply said that when it comes to megaprojects, we must be cautious and take some principles or prerequisites into account. I referred to the questioning and the whole process that had been followed before. I mentioned the environmental concerns of Friends of the Earth and others.

(1355)

In conclusion, I am not against the project; I do not say that it is a bad deal. All I am saying is that we must be cautious about investing 1.47 billion in 1992 dollars in a difficult period like this. It is simply a message of caution that I was getting across. I am not against the project and neither is my party nor was my leader this morning.

About the temporary jobs, it is the same reasoning as for the present infrastructure program. Once the street is paved or the sidewalk is built, there is nothing more to do. The street will not be repaved for years.

What I said is that once the bridge is built, only 60 permanent jobs will be created to operate the bridge and the jobs of the 360 ferry workers will be lost. You mention tourism development on Prince Edward Island and I agree with you that it—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I would just like to remind the hon. member and all our colleagues in the House to avoid addressing one another directly and to go through the Chair, please.

**Mr. Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, I was in full oratorical flight, since I am a passionate man, but you are right to call me to order.

Yes, we agree that tourism will develop on Prince Edward Island as a result. The question is, given that it is an island, is the tourism structure limited by geography? I agree with the hon. member that there will be development, no argument on that point, but I was talking about the temporary jobs building the bridge.

As for open-mindedness, I am sure that my colleague understood what I meant. When the time comes to discuss in this House or in committee the need for a high speed train between Quebec City and Windsor and to give the MIL Davie shipyard the contract to the Magdalen Island ferry, which will maintain 10,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Quebec City region—we are talking about maintaining jobs. It is important to create jobs, but it is also important to maintain them. The Official Opposition has shown that it is not narrow minded. It has shown openness and I am sure that hon. members opposite will show the same openness when the time comes to discuss the two issues that I mentioned, the high speed train and the ferry.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Just a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. I think that you can count on the Liberal Party to be very open minded. Open mindedness has

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always characterized our party and I believe it will still be the case in the future.

If I am not mistaken, my colleague said he was in favour of the project, and so is his party, but he also pointed out that Friends of the Island had some concerns about possible environmental impacts.

Does my colleague think that these concerns are so serious—of course we will be careful but just the same—as to warrant stopping the project? Has enough been done so far, with 90 analyses and the 80-odd meetings? Is there enough evidence to allow us to proceed with the project with some assurance that it will go well, that it is not too risky?

**Mr. Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is no, the project must not be stopped, it must go forward. I think that our stand is clear on that. On the other hand, if the project has no impact on local lobster and scallop fishermen, why did the government feel the need to compensate them? This would mean that compensation is paid for nothing.

I am not saying that the concerns of the group were futile, just this: even if its action was dismissed by the courts, the group will have to keep a watchful eye on things to make sure that the project will be as environment friendly in reality as studies claimed it will be. That is the point I was making about the environment.

(1400)

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** Order. It being two o'clock p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to statements by members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]*

### TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the recipients of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in Science, Technology and Mathematics were honoured. The 17 recipients, coming from all parts of Canada, are all exceptional teachers. They have formulated and put into practice innovative teaching methods.

In my riding, Mr. Richard Hopkins, a teacher at Napanee District Secondary School, is cited for creating an applied science and technology program which responds to local community needs. The students gain invaluable practical experience. There can be no greater testimony to Mr. Hopkins' ability than the fact that it was his students who nominated him for the award.

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I note that the award winners are presently in Ottawa. I ask the House to join me today in congratulating all 17 worthy recipients of this national award.

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#### QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford):** Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's *Montreal Gazette*, one could read "Anglo-Catholics demoralized by Bloc victory". On behalf of my party, the Bloc Quebecois, I would like to reassure my fellow anglo-Quebecers. We have been elected by the people of Quebec to promote and prepare the sovereignty of Quebec. Perhaps now is the right time for the English speaking of Quebec to join us, to get more involved in the preparation of Quebec's future.

Let us look forward together. Doing this would make the process of change easier for us and the rest of Canada, hopefully side by side in harmony as partners in a new deal.

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#### RECALL LEGISLATION

**Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, many people in the riding of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville have expressed the desire to initiate recall proceedings to replace their elected member of Parliament.

The majority of people in my riding of Fraser Valley West want recall legislation to ensure that I and those who follow in my footsteps are held accountable.

My colleague from Beaver River, Alberta, has twice submitted a recall bill because neither the Liberal nor the Conservative governments want to be held accountable to those who elect them.

It is time that the 295 people in this House acknowledge the wishes of the vast numbers we represent and provide them with the rights they deserve and the accountability we require.

Let us all together acknowledge the need to represent Canadians to the best of our ability and the right of Canadians to recall us if we do not. Let us all commit to recall.

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#### TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS

**Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington):** Mr. Speaker, two exemplary teachers from the Halton Board of Education were honoured with the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in Science, Technology and Mathematics.

I extend my congratulations to Mr. Robert Loree and Mr. Keith Clark.

The qualification for winning this award is that a teacher must have shown a major impact on student performance and interest in science, technology and mathematics. Mr. Loree developed the Science Can! Foundation. Over 10,000 students in three provinces have participated in this highly successful organization. Mr. Keith Clark led teachers in developing the grade nine destreamed science curriculum.

Encouraging the interest and participation of students in the fields of mathematics, science and technology is critical to ensuring that Canada will be able to continue to compete in the 21st century.

I am certain that the hon. member for Oakville—Milton, the hon. member for Halton—Peel and the rest of the Government of Canada members join me in congratulating Robert Loree and Keith Clark and the rest of the recipients of this terrific award.

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#### ACADEMY AWARDS

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre):** Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I would like to bring to the attention of the House that last week the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced the nominations for this year's Academy Awards ceremony to be held in Los Angeles on March 21.

Once again the excellence of Canadian film making was recognized with the nomination of two highly regarded projects. The first, "The Mighty River", directed by Frédéric Back and produced by Hubert Tison at the Société Radio-Canada, was nominated as Best Animated Short Film.

The second, "The Broadcast Tapes of Doctor Peter", produced by David Papernay and Arthur Ginsberg at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Vancouver, was nominated as Best Feature-Length Documentary Film.

I would like to congratulate our nominees and recognize the quality and dedication of our public broadcasters. They deserve our continued support.

\* \* \*

(1405)

#### MULTICULTURAL WEEK

**Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, this week in British Columbia we celebrate multicultural week. Multicultural week started in 1984 to celebrate our cultures and traditions. In British Columbia, where multiculturalism has played such an important role, all people come together to share and understand each other. Cross-cultural education has destroyed many barriers and is helping in the fight against racism. Multiculturalism teaches us about people and helps us all understand and appreciate each other.

Lectures, meetings and cross-cultural events will take place during the week, giving all people a chance to dismiss our biases and myths and to immerse in a wonderful world of differences and similarities.

Multiculturalism applies to all of us. We all have a culture, we all have ethnicity. Let us all celebrate in the spirit of understanding that permeates this week-long event and that will unite all people in British Columbia.

Happy multicultural week to our British Columbians and a vote of thanks to all those who have spent hours of volunteer work to promote and keep all cultures of Canada alive.

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[Translation]

#### BISHOP WILLY ROMÉLUS

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of this House that His Lordship Willy Romélus, Bishop of Jérémie, in Haiti, was recently recommended for a Nobel Peace Prize nomination by Professor Roberto Miguelez, of the University of Ottawa, and that since that time, many organizations have also supported his nomination.

It is worth recalling that for several years already and at the risk of his life, on which attempts have been made many times, Bishop Romélus has been leading the fight for the liberation of the Haitian people. As early as February 1984, Bishop Romélus was calling for internationally supervised elections in that country and on February 22, 1993, he received the Governor General of Canada Medal.

In view of that, Bloc Québécois members have decided to support his nomination and are hoping that many other members will follow.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### MICHELLE MORTON

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize an outstanding Canadian athlete, one who lives in my riding of Calgary Southeast. Michelle Morton is a speed skater competing in Lillehammer this week as part of our Canadian Olympic team.

Michelle embodies the spirit of what we are all about as Canadians. Great hopes coupled with hard work have achieved results which for her were not completely expected. Michelle has recurring attacks of asthma and it is her focus and determination that now place her as a powerful member on the Canadian roster.

Her persistence as a competent athlete at both the provincial and national levels demonstrates that obstacles can be overcome in the pursuit of a dream and we are proud of that achievement.

*S. O. 31*

On behalf of all of the residents of Calgary Southeast I send our encouragement, admiration and affection.

Go get them, Michelle.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CANADA SCHOLARSHIPS

**Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, February 11, I had the honour of representing the government in my riding of Outremont at a ceremony where 97 students from the University of Montreal received awards from the Canada Scholarships Program. These scholarships are awarded to students who excel in science and engineering. During this ceremony I was able to witness the attachment of many of them not only to their province, but also to Canada. After the ceremony, one of the students asked me why the scholarships were taxable. They felt the government was giving with one hand and taking back with the other.

I draw the attention of the ministers responsible to that, because these hard-working students are the bearers of the values of excellence we seek to promote. They will be the leaders of tomorrow, and we should give them all the help we can give. Canada Scholarships are certainly a good program but if we do not tax lottery prizes, should we tax scholarships?

\* \* \*

[English]

#### JOB TRAINING

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Lincoln):** Mr. Speaker, a key issue in the Liberal campaign platform is getting Canadians back to work. One way this will occur is by strengthening and assisting the small and medium-size business sectors.

We all know of small businesses that have had difficulty obtaining proper financing. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business makes the point that equity markets are biased toward large firms. The only way to relieve the equity problem of small firms is to create incentives for Canadians to invest their savings in private businesses to create wealth and jobs in local communities across the country.

(1410)

With so many Canadians facing retraining, the government must begin to acknowledge that informal training provided by small and medium-sized businesses is a critical dimension to the retraining taking place. The government must develop training initiatives which support small businesses involved in retraining in the informal setting.

Our public funding of skills development should focus on literacy and generic skills. Maximum autonomy should be placed at the local community level to determine training needs and outcomes.

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If any of these recommendations are adopted it would help spur a recovery in the small and medium-sized business sectors and assist in the recovery of the Canadian economy. This is, after all, what Canadians have asked for.

\* \* \*

**OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES**

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park):** Mr. Speaker, in a world rife with conflict it is easy to overlook the fact that the Olympic games were created for the purpose of gathering nations together under a banner of peace. The five rings of the Olympic flag symbolize the joining of all five continents in the spirit of athletic competition.

Despite the bitter war in former Yugoslavia, hope for peace in Europe now rests in Lillehammer, Norway.

I am therefore very proud of one of my constituents from Parkdale—High Park who is representing Canada at the 17th Olympic Winter Games. Kennedy Ryan will compete in free-style skiing in which she will join young athletes from around the world.

Let us not overlook the spirit of the games. I congratulate the Ryan family and friends who are just as proud as I am of all of our Canadian Olympic athletes.

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*[Translation]***CHILE**

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am a Quebecer born in Chile, a country I love with all my heart, and which lived under a long military dictatorship until 1989, when Patricio Aylwin was democratically elected president.

His mandate will end on March 11 when he will be replaced by Eduardo Frei, who was elected last December.

Every nation in the world has been invited to send a delegation to the ceremonies marking this handing over of office. More than 20 heads of state have already confirmed that they will attend this major event.

Chile is particularly important for Quebec and Canada.

It is therefore desirable for Canada to send a ministerial delegation to represent our country on March 11. I strongly urge the government to do so.

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*[English]***THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver):** Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed to note that the Canadian dollar dropped by more than

half a cent yesterday, continuing a rapid decline which started after the last election.

Since the end of October 1993 the dollar has lost more than two and a half cents, raising the cost of imports and increasing the risk of rapidly escalating interest rates in the near future.

The Minister of Finance has not publicly set a target level for either the dollar or interest rate levels. I urge him to do so as soon as possible so that Canadian businesses and citizens can make plans for future spending.

The minister must be aware that upward pressure on the cost of living will result from the decline of the dollar. I hope that he is not trying to inflate his way out of an impending debt crisis rather than take positive action to reduce government spending.

The message from the people of Canada is clear. Cut out entire segments of government and grants to special interest groups rather than raise taxes or permit a major decline in the Canadian dollar.

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**TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS**

**Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of the House and to give our congratulations to the 17 national level winners of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in Science, Technology and Mathematics.

I would especially like to mention Mr. Douglas H. Cunningham of Bruce Peninsula District High School in Lion's Head, a village in my riding of Bruce—Grey. He is a recipient of the award at the local level.

Mr. Cunningham is an example of excellence and enthusiasm in instilling in our youth those skills critical to the future of a healthy Canada.

I know that the Bruce Peninsula District High School in Lion's Head is known for the outstanding students it produces, especially in the field of science. The people of Bruce—Grey riding salute Mr. Cunningham for his outstanding contribution.

I know that members of this House will join with me in recognizing and congratulating, on behalf of all Canadians, all the winners of this well deserved award.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***WINTER OLYMPICS**

**Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East):** Mr. Speaker, a great sense of pride filled the heart of all Canadians, on the day before yesterday, when Edi Podivinsky won the bronze medal in men's downhill skiing in Kvitfjell, Norway.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Edi is only the second Canadian to win an Olympic men's skiing medal. His achievement is matched only by Steve Podborski's result in the men's downhill at the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics. To achieve excellence in his event Edi Podivinsky had to overcome the pain of injury and adversity. He is an athlete with the determination to meet every challenge.

Sport is at the heart of the Canadian identity. It gives Canadians a sense of pride, mutual respect and confidence in our ability to succeed.

In the spirit of our rich sporting heritage the Canadian government is proud to be a partner in building sport for the future and in supporting the development of our heroes such as Edi Podivinsky.

*[Translation]*

On behalf of all members I would like to congratulate Edi Podivinsky for his remarkable achievement.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

*[Translation]*

### ORGANIZED CRIME

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, last night on *Le Point*, Radio-Canada broadcast a report from a smuggler which confirms there are close ties between the warriors and organized crime in Montreal.

In another article published today by journalist Michel Vastel, we read that last autumn, the RCMP cancelled two police operations that were to take place on a Mohawk reserve near Montreal.

Could the Solicitor General or the Prime Minister inform the House whether they obtained answers from the RCMP to the questions I asked yesterday about warriors involvement in certain criminal activities of organized crime in Montreal?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I discussed the matter with the Commissioner of the RCMP this morning. He informed me that the RCMP enforces the law throughout the country and that it had no knowledge of a drug warehouse on an aboriginal reserve in the Montreal area.

I may add that we must take very seriously the information I was given by the RCMP commissioner, who is one of the world's leading police officials.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the work of the RCMP, one nevertheless wonders how the RCMP could be expected to know what is happening down there if it does not go there.

I also wonder how we can reconcile the minister's answer with what was said by the person who appeared on television last night and claimed to have been an eye witness to the facts I just reported.

The Prime Minister says: Name names. Who, who? Well I can name Minister Claude Ryan of the Quebec government who, for many years, was responsible for the Sûreté du Québec and who said yesterday he had known for years that organized crime and the warriors were working together. Perhaps the RCMP should talk to the Sûreté du Québec or the Solicitor General could talk to his Quebec counterparts.

Once again, my question to the Solicitor General is this: Could he tell the House who in the federal government, at the political level or otherwise, ordered the cancellation of a major police operation planned last December by the RCMP and the Drug Enforcement Agency on reserve territory? Who cancelled the operation? There was a government here last December.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, of course I cannot comment on the RCMP's operations. Does the Leader of the Bloc Québécois want to jeopardize the outcome of these investigations with his questions? I wonder why he is asking me these questions today.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition):** The Leader of the Opposition is merely transmitting questions that are being asked all over Canada, questions that are reflected on television and in reports in the newspapers. It is a very legitimate question. We have a right to know. Canadian and Quebec voters have a right to know whether the law is being observed and whether there are in this country certain "no go" zones for law enforcement. And the Solicitor General has a duty to answer these questions.

(1420)

Which reminds me, I have another question which is even more specific: Could he confirm the allegations published in today's newspapers that the chief of the squad in charge of anti-drug operations at the RCMP prevented his officers from going on reserve territory to pursue surveillance operations and make arrests?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Leader of the Bloc populaire, excuse me, the Bloc Québécois—it is not very popular right now—

**Some hon. members:** Very popular!

**Mr. Gray:** Thus, I can assure the leader of the Bloc Québécois that there are no "no go" zones in this country, including aboriginal reserves. I cannot confirm the allegations made in the article by Mr. Vastel which appeared today, but I repeat that the government intends to ensure that people obey the law across

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this country. And I hope I can count on the Leader of the Opposition to fully support our policy in this respect.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, given the statements made yesterday by the former Quebec Minister of Public Security, it is clear that the only person in Canada not to know that the RCMP and the Sûreté will not take action on Mohawk land is the Solicitor General of Canada.

Both he and the Prime Minister told us during the course of a debate that the situation was extremely delicate and that caution had to be exercised. Why does he maintain that the RCMP can take action on Mohawk land without any problem whatsoever, considering that even the Prime Minister stressed the delicate nature of the situation several days ago?

[English]

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say again that under this government there are no no-go zones.

I do not know what the situation was when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Conservative cabinet. He may want to tell us himself, but I can say there are no no-go zones right now. It is the intention of this government to have the law enforced everywhere in the country. Just because we do not see mounted police on television does not mean they are not at work on the reserves or anywhere in Canada where there is work to be done to enforce the law.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, since RCMP authorities have confirmed that in addition to cigarettes, smuggling networks deal in luxury items such as clothing, jewellery and alcohol, how can the Solicitor General expect us to believe that these networks would not be used to deal in the most lucrative item of all, namely cocaine?

[English]

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition House leader must have been in a dream world the last week or so. If he had not been, he would have heard the leader of our party, the Prime Minister, and myself saying that the reason we have to act immediately after years of neglect, including the period when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Conservative cabinet, was that there were smuggling networks involved not only with tobacco but with alcohol, drugs and high powered military weapons.

We said that right in this House. That is why we have enhanced enforcement efforts all over the country. Rather than this type of approach by the Official Opposition, I would think it

would express support for the efforts we are taking which go far beyond what was the case when the Leader of the Opposition was on this side of the House as a member of the Conservative cabinet.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

As new members we have now sat through numerous government briefings in which we have been presented with departmental and program mission statements, mandate statements and statements of objective. We notice that very few of these statements contain any reference to the serious financial position of the government or the interests of taxpayers.

(1425)

Would the Prime Minister, this week, direct all departmental program and agency heads to revise their mission statements to include deficit reduction and maximizing benefits to taxpayers as explicit goals of every department, program and agency of the Government of Canada?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, if I were to do it this week I would be late. I did it the first day I formed the government.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice):** I will ask the ministers to make sure they run a lean, effective government and to make sure taxpayers are getting service for the tax dollars they pay.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister.

As the Prime Minister knows, over 70 per cent of the net expenditures of the government are statutory expenditures and not voted on annually by the House.

Would the Prime Minister consent to bring the review of statutory spending within the purview of the House and its committees on an annual basis?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Reform Party will know that there will be budget bills in front of the House and that he will be able to present amendments. If he wants to reduce old age pensions of course we will vote against it.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question. Perhaps we will get further this time.

The Auditor General points out that federal revenues from user fees, from government facilities, services and goods exceed

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\$3 billion annually but that these fees are not subject to regulatory review or parliamentary scrutiny.

Would the Prime Minister direct the Treasury Board to provide Parliament with a government-wide summary of user fees being charged, the revenues raised and the authorities under which they are established?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure):** Mr. Speaker, revenue information is provided in various levels of detail both in the public accounts which have now been filed with the House as well as in part III of the estimates.

We certainly want to be in a position to provide whatever information we can to be helpful to parliamentarians. We are reviewing the whole matter with respect to what improvements could be made in presentation and disclosure in that connection and to determine the appropriate information that would be helpful to members.

I will be writing to parliamentary committees to seek their advice on what types of information with respect to user fees they would find useful in their deliberations.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EUTHANASIA**

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert):** Mr. Speaker, in 1991, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-261 on euthanasia and cessation of treatment, which was later dropped from the Order Paper. A private member's motion on the subject was debated in March 1993, and the House rejected this motion.

Instead of having a debate of no consequence on the issue, will the government table a bill to decriminalize, under certain circumstances and conditions, the act of assisting the terminally ill to put an end to their suffering?

[English]

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, the government intends to provide through Parliament a forum for informed discussion of the important and complex issues this subject raises.

At a time that we will announce and by means that we will develop through discussion in caucus and cabinet, we will furnish to the House an opportunity to explore the public policy questions that arise, and likely in a free vote an opportunity will be afforded for each member of Parliament to express her or his view on these questions. The matter will come forward to this House in an informed way so that the issues around this terribly difficult but important subject can be addressed.

(1430)

In closing may I remind my hon. friend that the vote last year on the private member's bill was taken in the shadow of the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Rodriguez case. Many members felt it was best to await the outcome of the court's determination before having Parliament act. We now have the judgment in that case. We know that the judges feel it is our responsibility and we intend to discharge it.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert):** Mr. Speaker, does the minister not recognize that it is pointless to hold yet another debate if it does not result in legislation, especially since the Supreme Court has concluded that Parliament must settle the issue one way or another, not just talk about it?

[English]

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we will find a way to put the question before the House so it is not academic. It will be meaningful. If it involves a proposal for change in legislation with a free vote then that is exactly what we will do.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

In 1983 four household moving van lines were convicted of price fixing and are now under a prohibition order, of which I have a copy. Yet only these four van lines can bid on the department's moving business, from which 900 other moving companies are effectively excluded.

Can the minister provide a statement of whether its present government tendering practice is contrary to the letter or the spirit of the prohibition order or in fact may be illegal?

**Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, certainly I have no knowledge of any action the department is involved in that is illegal. I am sure it is not the case.

I answered a similar question from my colleague from Waterloo a few weeks ago. The matter is being looked into and I will get back to the House at the earliest opportunity. At the moment it is somewhat premature to comment any further.

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for the minister. I am still waiting for the answer to a question from two weeks ago. In the meantime the government tender closed on February 12 for this year's moving business.

*Oral Questions*

Can the minister assure us that these tender bids will be open to public scrutiny when they are opened?

**Hon. David Michael Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, under the arrangement we have with the company involved, any changes to the regime have to be made by July of the previous year. The former government did not make that change. We have until July 31 of this year to address the situation. I assure the hon. member we will address it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAINTED BLOOD**

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. The inquiry on the tainted blood scandal started its hearings yesterday in Toronto. We found out that the victims only had until March 15 to accept a compensation settlement and to abandon any legal claims. The victims who do not sign this agreement would not receive any compensation.

Does the minister recognize that this is shameless blackmail, a real holdup unworthy of a civilized society?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** I should explain, Mr. Speaker, that the March 15 deadline was set by the provinces for a provincial program that was accepted by the provinces and not for a federal program.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, will the minister make a commitment, in the name of compassion and decency, to pay interim compensation without asking the victims to abandon any legal claims?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, Justice Krever was commissioned to review the safety of the Canadian blood system and to make recommendations on how it can be made even safer. I fully support the inquiry and will do everything to ensure its success.

In reply to the hon. member's question, I say again that the March 15 date is part of a provincial program to help the victims of tainted blood. Perhaps she could direct her questions to another level of government.

\* \* \*

(1435)

**JOB TRAINING**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, recently on the TV program "Venture" it was revealed that the type of training unemployed Canadians are getting through human

resources development not only does not help but may actually hurt their chances of getting a job.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Will the minister table the human resources development document that was quoted in the "Venture" program and call for an immediate free debate on the future of job training in Canada?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the hon. member has been but a week or so ago the House had three days of debate on the whole issue of employment, training and social security.

I would suggest he start reading his news clippings and *Hansard* so he can be up to date on what Parliament is doing before he asks a question.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Canadian people will appreciate that answer.

By the time the review of social programs is complete the government will have spent over \$1.5 billion on what, according to the minister's department, is useless training. So as not to waste the time of the unemployed or taxpayers' money, will the minister tell us what steps he is taking to ensure this problem is addressed immediately?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to report to the House that yesterday we had a meeting of all the provincial ministers of employment, labour market training and social services, as well as those from the territories. We discussed a number of issues.

One of the things we agreed on was that we take immediate steps to end duplication of services, to look at where there are cost overruns, where we can begin to rationalize programs like training in order to save money and get better delivery of services.

The hon. member should be very happy we have now been able to achieve full scale co-operation of all the provinces, territories and the federal government toward the objective of achieving better training and employment for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAINTED BLOOD**

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. As soon as the inquiry on the tainted blood scandal opened yesterday in Toronto, Justice Krever asked that the mandate of this inquiry be extended by one year, given the complexity of this case.

Does the minister share the opinion expressed by Justice Krever and, as a result, will she extend the mandate of the inquiry so that it can shed light on the whole complex issue?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I am quite concerned about this. We must reassure Canadians that their blood bank is safe. Yes, Justice Krever asked for a little more time and we will consider his request, but we are also anxious to see his report. So we will try to give him the answers he wants in order to get the results that Canadians need.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the minister is aware that rushing the testimony would reduce the extent of this inquiry. As a result, and for the sake of consistency, does the minister not agree that the Canadian Hemophilia Society and the commission should be given the money they need to clear up this whole scandal?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, it is a tragedy our blood system was contaminated as it was in the early eighties. It is essential we understand why it happened and make sure it never happens again.

A budget was set by a previous government. It allows the beginning of the inquiry. I know that cabinet will give consideration to the request for further funding.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of energy and natural resources.

As she knows carbon dioxide is a primary cause of climate change and poses a threat as a greenhouse gas.

(1440)

In view of the fact that there is a firm commitment to reduce carbon dioxide levels by 20 per cent by the year 2005, can the minister indicate to the House when she will be in a position to announce a federal-provincial plan for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague, the hon. member for Davenport, for his question on an issue of international concern.

Generally the approach of the government is one of consultation, co-operation and partnership. This is going to be a multi-stakeholder process or strategy that we put in place involving all levels of government, the private sector and individual Canadians.

As the hon. member may be aware, at a historic first meeting in November 1993 federal and provincial ministers of energy and the environment charged their officials with the task of developing a strategy and recommendations to stabilize greenhouse emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 and to consider

sustainable options for reductions of greenhouse emissions by the year 2005.

It is my expectation that the joint committee will report in November 1994. I am sure at that point the government will be developing further working plans in relation to our commitments.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The minister stated in the House that in the next budget he will reduce the tax allowance for business meals for the sake of greater equity. The best estimates are that this change in the tax code endangers 24,000 jobs in the restaurant industry.

Would the minister please explain to the people of Canada and to the workers in this industry how the likely effects of his proposed tax measures are consistent with his party's campaign slogan jobs, jobs, jobs?

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions)):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's quotation is from a different government.

I would like to confirm that the Minister of Finance made a statement in the House last Friday saying that a budget would be coming down on Tuesday. Such measures as those tax changes that he mentioned will be in the budget, if indeed that is one of the changes.

**Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound):** Mr. Speaker, I refer to a statement made right here that this would be something that the minister would do in the budget.

I have a supplementary question. Could the minister please inform the House on the number of manyears of work that will be created by the very capital intensive infrastructure program and how many manyears—

**The Speaker:** Order. I wonder if the hon. member might put his question in a little more general terms. We are getting into specifics.

**Mr. Grubel:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to be politically correct.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** I do not know that it is so much a matter of being politically correct, it is so that we can understand the question.

**Mr. Grubel:** I wonder whether the minister could tell the House the number of man years and woman years of work that will be created by the very capital intensive infrastructure program and how many man years and woman years of work will be lost by the lower spending in the very labour intensive restaurant sector.

*Oral Questions*

(1445)

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions)):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier the details of the budget will be given on February 22.

The tax changes the hon. member mentions have not been stated in this House. If there are such changes they will be stated in the budget itself and at that time the answer will be obvious.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. In today's newspaper coverage of the meeting of human resources ministers, we learned that the federal government, through its reform of social programs, intends to play a major role in social assistance and deal directly with Canadians, thereby violating provincial jurisdiction in that field.

Will the minister dare to confirm that he is considering abolishing transfers to provinces regarding social assistance and launch a direct payment program for Quebecers and Canadians?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is that yesterday we had a very co-operative, collaborative discussion with all the ministers from the provinces. We agreed to undertake a major review and re-examination of a number of programs that affect Canadians. That was a clear demonstration of how federalism works well when you make it work well and when you want to make it work well.

We look forward to working together at both levels of government to ensure that Canada's social programs effectively meet the needs of all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier):** Mr. Speaker, very cordial agreements were also reached at Meech Lake and in Charlottetown between the ministers representing the two levels of government. How can the minister explain that his government, which was elected on the platform of no more references to the constitution, is so blatantly violating provincial jurisdiction?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, coming from a member who voted against

the Charlottetown agreement it is no wonder she uses that as the model. We intend to do things very differently.

We intend to work in a co-operative way with all Canadians both through the federal and provincial governments. I say to the hon. member that this is not a matter of fighting over turf. This is not a matter of battling over jurisdiction. This is really a matter of how we can co-operate to get the best use of very scarce resources for the benefit of all Canadians.

That is our objective. I am glad to say it was one that was shared by all the provincial ministers at that meeting.

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**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

On January 1 the government imposed a 7 per cent payroll tax on all workers and employers in Canada in the form of an increase in unemployment insurance premiums, which all economists agree will kill jobs.

How is this tax increase consistent with the government's job creation objectives described in the red book?

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions)):** Mr. Speaker, the unemployment insurance premium increase that came into effect in January was a minimum amount. At the same time it was announced by the minister that the premiums would be held at a flat level because of the job creation commitment this government has.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville):** Mr. Speaker, if increasing UI premiums kills jobs, then it follows that reducing UI premiums would create jobs.

When does the minister expect to announce a reduction in UI premiums?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance with whom I have had many interesting and co-operative discussions on this matter, if the hon. member could curb his patience the Minister of Finance will present one of the most important and significant long term documents this House has seen in a long time next Tuesday.

\* \* \*

(1450)

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Like many other members I have had an opportunity to meet with refugees from the former Yugoslavia. These people are in

terrible shape. They have family members scattered all across the former Yugoslavia or in the surrounding countries.

Can the Minister for Citizenship and Immigration tell us what impact the changes he announced recently will have on refugees in general, but in particular refugees from the former Yugoslavia?

**Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in this area.

In addition to our peacekeeping role which is well known to all in this Chamber, Canada has attempted to do its best through immigration and refugee policies to try to alleviate the suffering in that area.

In 1992 the previous government extended a special program whereby individuals from the former republic of Yugoslavia in Canada on visitors visas would be allowed to reunify with their families. We have agreed to extend that program until July of this year. Some 3,000 individuals have taken advantage of that measure. In addition, we have also permitted on a similar family reunification basis for individuals in the former republic of Yugoslavia to apply from there and some 8,500 people have taken advantage of that program.

Also, in the levels that we have announced, 7,300 will be government sponsored refugees. Of that we have increased the number from the former republic of Yugoslavia to 2,400. We have also provided a reserve of 400 that we would not for one moment be shy to use if conditions worsen in that part of the world.

We have every hope that sanity will prevail very quickly.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot):** Mr. Speaker, in recent days, we witnessed the unfortunate breakdown of trade negotiations between the United States and Japan. If the verbal escalation degenerates into a real trade war between those two countries, Quebec and Canada will likely be adversely affected.

My question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. Is the minister not concerned by the adverse effect this conflict could have for Quebec and Canada?

[English]

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, throughout the period of negotiation between the United States and Japan we have made consistent and frequent interventions with both countries. This was done to ensure that any trade measures they contemplate on a bilateral level do not sideswipe other GATT members, in other words, that the princi-

ple of most favoured nation treatment be preserved in any such arrangements.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade agrees with our views.

My supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Would it not be desirable for the Prime Minister to personally inform the President of the United States of Canada's interests and concerns?

[English]

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, the discussions to which the hon. member refers have been broken off, as he is probably aware, and the United States is acting unilaterally in the protection of what it sees as its trade interests. There is no reason for the Prime Minister of Canada to intervene in that situation.

The concern we had was centred on whether the United States and Japan would agree, which they have not, upon measures that could have affected Canadian trade interests. That has not happened.

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#### MUSEUM OF INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

**Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Canadians can remember that the previous Prime Minister provided for a federal penitentiary in his riding at taxpayers' expense. Now the federal government recently approved \$4.5 million of funding for a museum of industrial history in Shawinigan, the current Prime Minister's riding.

Is it the intention of the present Prime Minister to equal or exceed the former Prime Minister in delivering federal funding to his own constituency?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, let me tell the hon. member that this project was asked for many months ago by the local authorities. In fact, the municipal government, the provincial government and all the political parties in the province of Quebec unanimously support this initiative. It is sad the hon. member's party did not run a candidate in Quebec because I suspect that party would have supported the project also.

(1455)

The contribution of the federal government is modest compared with the contributions coming from the private sector and the provincial government. It will allow the creation of employment. It will be a centre of tourism. It will generate and spin off a number of financial consequences which will benefit the entire region and not exclusively the riding of the Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, time and time again we hear just what we heard a moment ago. That seems to be a commitment of previous governments or of some other past groups. The fact is if this government can do away with EH-101s it certainly could have prevented this \$4.5 million expenditure.

Is the Prime Minister today delivering on the promise he made last fall in his own campaign to look after his riding? Is the Prime Minister saying that he is delivering \$4.5 million to his own riding at the expense of taxpayers across this country?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. member that this contribution is part of a number of other contributions from the private sector. The private sector is investing three times the amount the federal government is investing in this project.

It will create employment for hundreds in the region and will serve the interests not only of the riding of the Prime Minister but the entire region.

I assure the hon. member that if he visits the area he will be proud to see that this region is benefiting from the overall expenditures of the Canadian government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADIAN EXPORTS**

**Mr. Yves Rochelleau (Trois-Rivières):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade.

This morning we learned that Canada's position as an exporting country has been deteriorating for ten years. From 1982 to 1992, Canada's share of world exports was reduced by over 5 per cent. This translates into an export loss of \$7 billion in U.S. dollars and, according to Claude Picher of *La Presse*, represents a 300,000 job loss for Canada.

What concrete measure does the government intend to take to correct the disastrous situation of Canadian exports, which is an important reason for the collapse of our job market?

[English]

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, the statistics the hon. member cites reflect the fact that there has been a global recession. Specifically in the case of Canada, however, we have put in place a number of initiatives intended to take the opportunities offered to Canadian companies by the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round at the GATT and by the implementation of NAFTA as elaborated by this government when it came into office.

Our trade promotion programs and activities are intended not only to exploit those additional opportunities that result from the reduction in trade barriers but also to identify new opportu-

nities particularly in Asia and across the Pacific, including for example our friends in Korea who offer us all sorts of new trading opportunities.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

Treasury Board has a policy allowing employees to attend school full time while receiving full pay. Recently someone in the National Transportation Agency received a salary of more than \$80,000 a year while attending university full time.

(1500)

Will the minister tell us how many federal employees are currently on this paid leave status, attending university instead of performing the work for which they were hired?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure):** Mr. Speaker, employees go on training programs to learn and to be able to use that as a valuable resource of information when it comes to doing their job.

I would be happy to look into any of the specifics the hon. member happens to be concerned about. The government is concerned with the efficient spending of tax dollars. Certainly training is a very important part of efficient use of tax dollars.

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**PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

**Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence):** Mr. Speaker, you and other members will know of the importance of Pearson International Airport to the Canadian economy. It is one of Canada's most prized pieces of infrastructure. Its importance to the economy of southern Ontario and to all of Canada is beyond question.

Recently there have been some reports in the press that have given us a confused message on what will be happening to this valuable piece of infrastructure.

Would the Minister of Transport be so good as to clarify for all members present what the position of the government might be with respect to any plans in the short term or the long term for improving the performance of Pearson and in fact improving the value of this piece of Canadian infrastructure?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the hon. member that Pearson has enormous economic importance, not just to the greater Toronto area but to Canada as a whole.

The question we must face and that I want to address in response to my hon. friend's question is that in the short term we have announced there will be no new construction this year. We

are going to complete the construction that was begun last year under a quick start project.

I want to emphasize that we intend to listen to members of Parliament from the greater Toronto area. We intend to listen to the leaders of the municipalities, the city of Toronto and other communities in that area to make sure that when we do something at Pearson we do the right thing.

\* \* \*

#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw to the attention of members the presence in the gallery of three distinguished visitors: His Excellency Sung-Joo Han, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; Hon. Jim Smith, Minister of Community and Social Services of the Nova Scotia Legislature; and Hon. Dan Miller, Minister of Skills, Training and Labour of the Legislature of British Columbia.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

\* \* \*

#### PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR MARKHAM—WHITCHURCH—STOUFFVILLE

**Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of personal privilege to clarify an issue that has become a subject of debate not only in this Chamber but also across the nation.

This has impeded my ability to function effectively and efficiently as the member of Parliament for the riding of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville. This is the earliest opportunity for me to address the issue in the House.

Approximately two weeks before allegations against me first appeared in the media, I was contacted and threatened by an anonymous telephone caller. It was suggested to me that I should withdraw a pending appeal against the Toronto Board of Education at the Court of Appeal level; if I did not I would become front page news and suffer dire consequences. I ignored this threat and as a result I am standing before the House today.

Threats of blackmail or intimidation should not and will not compromise my commitment to free speech as a member of Parliament. Since this threat was made, accusations about my qualifications have been reported in the media.

(1505)

These accusations have seriously damaged my personal and professional credibility. In fact the media went beyond making simple accusations. They carried on a campaign of character assassination and were joined by others who jumped on the

#### *Privilege*

bandwagon to discredit my qualifications. I was accused, tried, convicted and executed due to their sheer ignorance. They created an hysteria without checking the facts with me regarding my academic credentials. Some accusations such as exaggerating my qualifications were mild in comparison to assertions of outright lying about my credentials.

On the public record I categorically refute all accusations of lying, exaggerating or misrepresenting any of my academic credentials.

I have earned a bachelor of science degree, a master of science degree in physics, a master of education degree in administration, a post graduate certification in education and, last but not least, a certification of completion of intermediate in laws abbreviated as LLB intermediate from the University of London.

I would like to add that none of these credentials is honorary or purchased from a diploma factory. I would also like to add that LLB intermediate is not a degree. It is a recognition of successful completion of two years of law education at the University of London, England.

To clear any doubts whether any such recognition exists, I would like to quote relevant information from the certificate of completion sent by the registrar of the University of London on February 2, 1994. It reads: "This is to certify that Jag Bhaduria passed the intermediate examination in laws in 1976 in the following subjects", et cetera, et cetera. I respectfully request unanimous consent to table these documents.

I have also been accused of misrepresenting myself or representing myself as a lawyer. I have never been a lawyer or represented myself as a lawyer to anyone. Even completion of a law degree will not entitle me to practise law without fulfilling further requirements. There are many persons in Ontario and in other provinces who do possess completed law degrees but are not lawyers.

I can understand the anger generated by these wild, false and baseless accusations. I agree with and applaud the right hon. Prime Minister when he stated that he does not like being lied to. Nor do I. Nor does any hon. member of the House.

With my conviction and firm belief in the policy of honesty and integrity of elected officials at all levels, I refute these false allegations in the presence of my peers in the House. We do not have to be saints but we must strive to uphold these principles. I invite my colleagues in the House to examine my academic credentials and weigh the accusations in a rational and judicious manner.

In conclusion I request the House to ensure that no Canadian be subjected to the demeaning and humiliating accusations I have been confronted with since becoming a member of Parliament.

*Tributes*

**The Speaker:** The Chair at this point is not convinced of the linkage between the words that the member has used and his impediment to being able to carry out his functions.

(1510)

However, I wish to review the documents which I will permit to be put on the table but not tabled. I will consider what the hon. member has said and I will get back to the House just as soon as is feasible.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE LATE IRÉNÉE PELLETIER

**Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke):** Mr. Speaker, even as I address this House, Mr. Irénée Pelletier, who was the member of Parliament for the constituency of Sherbrooke between 1972 and 1984 and who unfortunately passed away last Friday, is being buried in a religious ceremony in the church at Saint-André-de-Madawaska, the village of his birth.

Irénée Pelletier died at the age of 54. He was the 13th of 14 children, something many of us can identify with, and he accomplished many things in his life.

After receiving a BA from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, he earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Toulouse in France. The subject of his thesis was Canada's aid to developing countries, and this was in the very early seventies.

He had a very full life. He was a member of the Canadian forces and he was also very active. He travelled extensively and after his studies he worked as a professor with the faculty of administration at the University of Sherbrooke. In 1972 he ran for the first time as the candidate of the Liberal Party of Canada in the riding of Sherbrooke. Of course he won that election and those that followed in 1974, 1979 and 1980.

While sitting in the House of Commons as the member for Sherbrooke, he was very active and became interested in several issues. For several years he chaired the Standing Committee on Regional Industrial Expansion. He was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. He was also very active in various interparliamentary groups.

He was very interested in peace and disarmament issues. In fact—I remember because he told me himself—he had to make a personal, very difficult decision when the House held a debate on cruise missiles and he felt compelled to vote against his own government on a motion to test these missiles.

He told me how torn he was feeling during this debate and how he finally decided to take a very personal position that, incidentally, reflected his deep concern over the hunger problem

and other issues affecting to different degrees people suffering around the world.

I had the privilege to face Irénée Pelletier during the 1984 general election. If I may, I would like to relate an election anecdote that says a lot about Mr. Pelletier. We conducted two polls during the election. The first one said basically two things: first, that Mr. Pelletier was very popular with Sherbrooke voters, which was bad news for the other candidates. Another piece of bad news at the very beginning of the campaign was that Mr. Pelletier was going to win the election. The second poll asked the same questions, with the same results.

(1515)

At the end of the campaign, Mr. Pelletier was just as popular with Sherbrooke voters but this time we found out the wave that was about to sweep Canada was also going to have an impact in the constituency he had been representing since 1972.

Today, it is with some emotion that I join those who have known him in saying how much we will miss him. I met Irénée Pelletier several times after the 1984 election. He was always very generous. I saw him a few days before he died. He was a committed man who served his community better than anyone else ever did. He left his mark in Sherbrooke in several areas because he was a very effective member of Parliament, and he always supported those who sought to help the disadvantaged in our society.

Sherbrooke has a service organization called Cercovie that he was instrumental in founding several years ago. We can thank Irénée Pelletier for that accomplishment.

On behalf of my family and especially of those who knew Mr. Pelletier, who had the privilege to be represented by him in the House of Commons, I want to say how much we will miss him. I especially want to offer our sincere condolences to his family and say in closing that the constituency of Sherbrooke and the country as a whole have lost a great man.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I would also like to speak on this subject. I too would like to extend my sympathies to the family of Irénée Pelletier, a distinguished member of Parliament who served with me in this House for 12 years.

In my view, here was a man who truly embodied what Canada stands for. Hailing from the Madawaska Valley in New Brunswick, he earned a degree from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in political science in France before returning to teach in Sherbrooke.

First elected to the House of Commons in 1972 he was, in the words of his successor, an excellent member of Parliament. He was extremely dedicated and friendly with everyone. He was very industrious and keenly interested in international affairs. Typically, however, he was deeply concerned about poverty and focused a lot of his attention on regional development. Given his

*Tributes*

rural roots, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Individuals like Irénée Pelletier who serve in Parliament are fine examples for others to emulate. On behalf of Aline and my party, I want to offer my condolences to the Pelletier family. May he always be remembered as a gentleman who served his riding, his province and his country with distinction.

**Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount):** Madam Speaker, I too served with Irénée Pelletier from 1979 to 1984 and I was deeply saddened by his demise.

Mr. Pelletier came from Saint-André-de-Madawaska, New Brunswick. A former university professor in Sherbrooke with a doctorate in history, he represented the people of Sherbrooke in the House of Commons, as my hon. colleagues pointed out, for 12 years, from 1972 to 1984.

In October 1975 he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Eugene Whelan.

Mr. Pelletier was a great champion of the Canadian marketing board system.

[English]

At a conference of Canadian grocery distributors in 1977 he decried the sometimes adversarial relationship between government and the food industry.

(1520)

He said: "An effective food policy, supported and administered through effective programs, is one that can only be achieved by a united approach".

[Translation]

One subject was particularly close to his heart and that was aid to developing countries. He even wrote his doctoral dissertation on this subject. In 1976 he travelled the country with fellow members Andrew Brewin and Douglas Roche to make Canadians aware of the needs of developing countries.

In a speech, Mr. Pelletier said:

[English]

"Canadians have not only a Christian responsibility but a human responsibility to help correct inequalities, and if the developed nations do not share with the developing nations chaos will result. Fifteen per cent of the world's population control close to eighty per cent of the world's wealth. Under these conditions we are just not going to have a peaceful world. The Third World is just not going to accept it".

[Translation]

After being defeated in 1984 he became involved in municipal politics, was elected alderman and then mayor of North Hatley.

Three years ago Mr. Pelletier studied in Rome to become a priest. This was to be the crowning achievement of a career in which the emphasis had always been on dedication.

On my behalf and that of my colleagues, I wish to extend my deepest sympathies to his family and friends, as well as to all those who were close to him.

**Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford):** Madam Speaker, although I did not know Mr. Pelletier, I wish to recognize his service in government from 1972 to 1984. On behalf of all members of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Irénée Pelletier, former member of Parliament for Sherbrooke.

[English]

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops):** Madam Speaker, I want to join with my colleagues in paying tribute to Irénée Pelletier, whom we remember in this House from the seventies and early eighties. We remember him to be a very popular member in his constituency. Often visitors from the constituency would come to Ottawa and he would go out of his way to introduce them, particularly to those of us from western Canada. I personally always appreciated that.

The fact that he won election after election speaks well of the kind of constituency person he was. We all remember the issues that he was deeply devoted to, not only in terms of overseas development from a Canadian perspective but particularly his concern for the plight of people living in many of the countries in which our aid projects were undertaken.

He would share those experiences from his travels and his knowledge with us in the House, particularly in those days in the evenings over dinner. He would come back from a trip and explain the kinds of conditions he experienced. I found him to be a very motivating individual and a very kind and compassionate member of Parliament.

I simply want to join with my colleagues in saying that Mr. Pelletier will be missed. Our hearts and our prayers go out to him, to his family and to his friends today. Again I want to say how sad we were when we learned of his passing.

[Translation]

**Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment):** Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to pay tribute to the memory of Dr. Irénée Pelletier.

*Government Orders*

I had the opportunity to deal with him on several occasions between 1985 and 1989. I think he was not only a politician and academic but mostly a person of great integrity and human warmth who was interested in his community, his country and anything that had to do with the quality of life.

He was always ready to work with all interested parties to improve the quality of life not only for ourselves but also for the generations to come. I would like to pay tribute to his memory and to extend my deepest sympathy to his family.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

(1525)

[English]

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FIXED LINK

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough):** Madam Speaker, this is the third time that I have had the opportunity to make a statement in this House concerning an aspect of the continuing saga of the fixed link between Prince Edward Island and the mainland.

For the benefit of those members who have recently joined us in this Chamber, this is an issue which has been at the top of the political agenda in Atlantic Canada for many years. The first major discussions about a fixed link evolved around a railway tunnel in the late 1880s. Then there was a combination of bridge, causeway and tunnel in the 1950s and 1960s. Now we are at the stage at which the actual construction of a bridge has begun.

The construction of a bridge between Prince Edward Island and the mainland has not been without controversy. Several court challenges have been mounted to prevent the construction.

To those who oppose this project I must say I respect the passion which they have shown for the cause, but at the same time I must respectfully disagree with the positions they have put forward. The governments of the Atlantic provinces, the Government of Canada and the vast majority of the residents of the regions agree that the construction of a fixed link should go ahead.

One by one the barriers to the construction of this project have fallen away. The latest reincarnation of this project, if I may be permitted to use that term, came about in 1987. Since that time more than 90 studies have been conducted and countless public meetings have been held with the general public and with special interest groups in all three maritime provinces.

Now it has been said, and it is true, that the original generic design of the bridge did not pass an environmental review panel.

However, careful study of the specific design of the current bridge did satisfy all of the requirements.

A special panel was convened to study the effects of the bridge on ice in the Northumberland Strait and it concluded that the bridge would have no significant effect.

Fishermen and ferry workers were concerned that the bridge would affect their livelihood and their specific concerns have been addressed with a settlement being reached with the fishermen in the area just last week. Talks are continuing with the ferry workers. I have every confidence that they too will come to a successful and mutually acceptable conclusion.

The work on the project has already begun and the economic upsurge in the Borden area of Prince Edward Island is noticeable already. The construction of the yards for fabrication of the concrete piers of the bridge is under way and employment has been created both there and in the town of Borden which is undergoing a mini real estate boom.

Just last week a tender was awarded to a New Brunswick firm for \$40 million worth of concrete to be delivered to the site, a contract which will create some 50 additional jobs. The construction will get into full swing in the year ahead and the economic spin-offs will be of tremendous importance to Prince Edward Island and to the rest of the region.

The very fact that the construction is under way has pointed out a major flaw which presently exists in our transportation system. Because of the geological make-up of Prince Edward Island it is necessary to transport gravel and fill from New Brunswick for construction of the yards in Borden. The truck traffic, as a result of this, has necessitated extra crossings of the ferry this year. There have been delays in truck traffic because of increased volume. All consumer products that come into Prince Edward Island come in by truck, and every delay adds to the eventual cost paid by consumers.

(1530)

Because of the severely cold weather this winter which has affected most of Canada there has been a tremendous build-up of ice in the Northumberland Strait. Some crossings last week took over five hours whereas in summer it would take about 45 minutes.

This shows that an improved system of transporting our goods out and our consumer products in is badly needed. If we in Prince Edward Island are to prosper and if our economy is to recover we must have a dependable and efficient transportation link with the rest of Canada. We have gone beyond the time where we can adopt a casual attitude when it comes to getting our goods to market. The world has become a highly competitive place and we have to compete at the very highest level if we are to succeed.

*Government Orders*

A few days ago I spoke in the House about the need for continued equalization payments to help the poorer areas of Canada carry on while they develop their economies. This fixed link project is one of the major construction projects in Canada today. When it is completed it will leave the lasting effect of an improved transportation system in our area.

The benefits will not only be immediate as we enjoy this influx of capital into our economy. They will flow to us for many years to come. The construction itself will create a pool of expertise in Atlantic Canada which will be in demand around the world for similar projects. The bridge itself will initiate a stability in our marketplace that is not there at the present time. In the future people can plan, schedules can be set, and products can get to market.

The last number of years have not been bright in Atlantic Canada. Our unemployment rate is the highest of any region. I also said a few days ago that there was not a politician in Atlantic Canada who would not be happy to see equalization funds flowing out of our region to help other areas of Canada rather than flowing in to bring us up to national standards. That is what this project is about. It is about creating opportunity for Atlantic Canada. It is about creating the opportunity which will allow Prince Edward Island and the rest of Atlantic Canada to stand on their own two feet.

We have tremendous resources in our region. We live within a one-day drive of millions of people who are looking for quality goods and services. We must be prepared to go after those markets and we must have the tools to be able to compete.

Since I have been involved in public life, and that goes back some 20 years, we have heard among other things two prescriptions for the recovery of Atlantic Canada. It has always been said, first, that we must add more value to our products and, second, that we should extend the length of our tourist season. Both these will become easier when the completion of the link and the improved transportation network it will entail become a reality.

The construction of this bridge represents our best hope in both the short and long term to create a dramatic economic improvement in Prince Edward Island and the rest of the maritime provinces. That is why we in the House must show our continuing support for the project. That brings us to the debate we are conducting today.

Transportation has always been one of our most dominant concerns in Atlantic Canada. During the age of sail we were at the leading edge of the world technology but during the winter months we could not sail very far. The age of sail gave way to the age of steam and changes had to be made. At the time that Prince Edward Island entered Confederation in 1873 and for a number of years thereafter, the link between my province and the

mainland was steamship during the summer months and ice-boats powered by oars in the winter.

The construction of the railway led Prince Edward Island into Confederation. Our Fathers of Confederation were sufficiently astute to include provisions in the Constitution that there be a steam service provided by the Government of Canada. Like the transportation systems of the day that was a state of the art constitutional provision. It made sense at the time to guarantee that the best available transportation system was included in the Constitution. That is precisely what this amendment is doing today. It is bringing the Constitution and its provisions with respect to transportation up to the present time.

(1535)

There are those who have argued, even in court, that this provision of the Constitution should not be changed. They have used that argument to try to prevent the building of the link. That argument is no more valid than it would be to argue that some of the statutes in some of our jurisdictions which once banned the automobile should not be changed.

The Constitution is a living thing. Constitutions must change and adapt to the changing times in which we live and to the advances and changes in technology which affect our daily lives. One wonders if the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick has been constitutional since the steamship gave way to the diesel powered ship many years ago.

This amendment will allow for people of one province of Canada, Prince Edward Island, to become full partners with the rest of the country. The Trans-Canada Highway in Prince Edward Island will be joined to the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick and islanders will be able to transport their goods directly to market in a timely and efficient manner.

We are entering an exciting time in Atlantic Canada. A new era of prosperity will come to our region fuelled in part by the regional economic policies of the government and in part by the construction of this very major project.

I urge all hon. members to support this constitutional amendment and to bring the Constitution of Canada as it impacts on the transportation system of Prince Edward Island into the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to make a few comments on the interesting speech of my hon. colleague who just spoke.

On this side of the House, it is always with interest that we observe what is being done for some provinces of Canada, especially Prince Edward Island which was able to renegotiate its terms of union with Canada and which today sees a project which has long been a source of argument on the Island and in

*Government Orders*

the rest of Canada. The federal government will finally allocate the required funds.

Considering the expressed desire of the people of Prince Edward Island and the willingness of the federal government to invest in this project, all we can do is acknowledge the democratically achieved decision of the population of P.E.I., which was presented with all the facts. It is not for us to decide what is good for them. We can only respect their will, although we look with some envy at the terms of union of British Columbia, which included a railroad from sea to sea, and more recently at the promises made to Newfoundland, in 1949, after lengthy negotiations.

Unfortunately Quebec never really negotiated its terms of union. We were, through an Act of the British Parliament, incorporated into a union of British colonies in North America. In 1867, we did not have much to say. No referendum was held in Quebec then, despite the repeated requests of the Liberal opposition.

This is why we hope that in a few months, like our friends in Prince Edward Island, we will be able to make a wise, enlightened and positive decision as to our fate as a nation and our desire to negotiate with Canada the terms of Quebec accession to full sovereignty.

(1540)

[English]

**Mr. Proud:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his intervention in the constitutional debate that he wants to get me involved in. I want to add that this constitutional amendment comes about because of the bilateral constitutional amendments that are allowed with one province but not more than one. That is why this has happened in New Brunswick and in Newfoundland.

It is happening in Prince Edward Island today because the legislative assembly of Prince Edward Island passed the same resolution last year. We are being asked to do so in this House today. I am sure the hon. member and his party agree that it should go ahead and see no problem in passing it.

As far as getting into the constitutional debate of the rest of the country, I will let other more qualified people than myself get involved in that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on this bill, that is this constitutional change.

[English]

I am pleased to speak in support of this resolution which will clear away one of the final remaining obstacles to the Northumberland Strait bridge project. Before proceeding further I want

to answer a few questions raised today. Neither the minister nor I had the opportunity to provide answers.

Some members will recall that a member of the Reform Party questioned the process the government was undertaking with respect to this initiative. I remind that colleague and other colleagues that the judge had directed the constitutional change. The judge had indicated the change could be undertaken via section 43. It is important to make those points for fear that someone may believe proper advice was not followed.

I was also somewhat taken aback by that member of Parliament who, with a certain amount of enthusiasm, suggested the government had received nothing but bad advice, that it might even have been proceeding illegally. I have to say this person does not lack in confidence and I wonder what credible source my colleague was quoting.

I underline as well the fact that the people of Prince Edward Island joined the union. They made that decision with a condition and it is correct for them to amend that condition. It is correct for them to determine that condition should be changed because they decided to join under it.

[Translation]

This morning, I believe the Bloc Quebecois made reference to a firm which indicated that some \$1.3 billion might be spent on that project. If that is indeed the comment made, it is erroneous. The fact is that this firm said in 1988 that even if the project was to cost \$1.3 billion, it would be worth it. This is not the same statement at all.

I also want to point out that we did have a reliable source, an independent engineer, who certified that the project would cost approximately \$840 million. Again, this amount was certified by an independent party.

I must add another comment. If there are additional costs and if the project goes over the estimated budget, what will happen? I think some are under the impression that the government would foot the bill. On the contrary, it is the private sector which would have to absorb these additional costs.

Finally, you are well aware that environmental concerns were raised regarding this project. I simply want to remind hon. members that more than 90 studies were conducted and over 80 meetings were held; moreover, two court decisions concluded that the project was very reasonable from an environmental point of view. Of course, you can never be absolutely sure, but if you look at megaprojects, you will see that the government proceeded very cautiously with this one, at least as regards financing and environmental aspects.

(1545)

Finally, there was this question about the workers. It is unfortunate—and I share this concern with my colleagues from both sides of the House—that workers will be displaced. It is really very unfortunate. I want to remind this House that this government makes it a priority—and I hope it is the same for all

my other colleagues—to find ways to meet the needs of these men and women.

With regard to the fixed link project, those workers will have hiring preference and some will be able to take advantage of early retirement programs. There will be training and retraining programs as well. I insist on it and I hope that we will work very hard together to try and make sure that these men and women will not find themselves out of work because of the bridge.

[*English*]

Having answered those questions I felt needed some additional detail, I want to proceed very quickly with some of the main points I consider important from my particular perspective.

Our government made it clear during the election campaign and in the recent throne speech that putting Canadians back to work is the number one economic, political and social challenge facing this country. We are committed to taking every step within our power to support job creation, to stimulate increased economic activity and to restore hope and confidence in the future for all Canadians. This project helps in reaching those particular goals.

Nowhere is this more the case, the need that is, than in Atlantic Canada which almost more than any other area of the country has suffered too long from high levels of unemployment resulting in dependency and despair. Everyone should welcome this initiative for that part of the country which has been hard hit economically.

The Northumberland Strait bridge project will have an immediate significant impact on the economy of Atlantic Canada in general and that of Prince Edward Island in particular. The rest of the country can expect to feel the positive effects of this project in the long term too. That is a positive spin off.

Members will recall we have estimated there will be 1,000 direct jobs for each of the four years of construction or almost 3,000 person years of employment in all. That is a lot of work for a lot of people. Under the terms of the contract between the federal government and the contractor, more than 95 per cent of these jobs will come from Atlantic Canada. Of course with its high unemployment numbers it is of particular importance to this area as well as the rest of Canada.

This project will provide a tremendous boost for employment throughout the region. It will provide thousands of workers with gainful employment and the opportunity to practise and improve their job skills, quite apart from the work it will provide. However direct employment tells only part of the story.

### *Government Orders*

The contract also specifies that some 70 per cent of the total procurement requirements will be sourced in the region. These requirements are massive: thousands of tonnes of cement, reinforcing steel cable, fabricated metal, manufactured components, et cetera. Given that the total project is estimated at \$840 million to \$850 million, the wages and procurement expenditures paid by the developer will inject more than \$.5 billion into the Atlantic economy over the next five years. This should give a real kick-start to the economy in a region of this great country that badly needs it.

It is also important to note that this bridge project most definitely is not a make-work project aimed at providing some short term relief for some of Canada's poorer provinces. Obviously once the bridge is built some jobs will cease, but there will be spin-off benefits. There will be an increase in tourism and in business opportunities. I could go on.

[*Translation*]

I for one have found the hon. minister's remarks very enlightening and convincing today. There is no question that the bridge project is a very good deal for the Canadian taxpayers. In accordance with the terms of the union act signed with Prince Edward Island, the federal government is clearly required to fund a link of some kind, whether a bridge or a ferry system, to join the island to the mainland.

In the case of a ferry service, it would cost Canadian taxpayers at least \$42 million a year for the next 35 years to allow Marine Atlantic to operate the service. This amount includes the cost of operating the ferries, the cost of maintenance and capital costs, for example, for the purchase of new icebreakers during that period. After 35 years, federal government subsidies should continue and increase because of the demand for service. As the minister mentioned, this would lead to uncontrolled spending with no end in sight, and that is not a good deal for the taxpayers of this country.

(1550)

Let me add a few comments to what the minister said about the environmental quality of the project. This has attracted a lot of attention during most of the five years that the project was being developed. The environment was the main concern of the government and of the developer. Indeed, this project has been the subject of the most thorough environmental studies ever undertaken for a project of this size. As I said, there were over 90 studies, 80 meetings and the public had many opportunities to speak on the project requirements at some 85 public meetings. This project meets all the technical requirements and all the environmental requirements.

*Government Orders*

In closing, I ask my colleagues to support this project because it is sound, it will meet the economic, tourism and other needs of the region and I think it is being approached in a most appropriate way.

[English]

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's comments cause me to think of a couple of questions which would appropriately be answered by him. I will have more to say about this motion later when I am recognized on debate.

The parliamentary secretary indicated in his opening remarks that the amendment today is required on the word of the courts. I think the parliamentary secretary is aware that the Federal Court had a number of things to say in regard to this project. Madam Justice Reed did say, as quoted by the previous minister of public works, that the constitutional amendment is not necessarily required until the ferry service is replaced. Of course the ferry service has not yet been replaced, yet we are going ahead with this.

Also the Federal Court ruled that the minister of public works had failed to comply with the requirements of section 12 of the environmental assessment review process and ruled that no irrevocable decision should be taken until this is taken care of. Is it the government's opinion that the section 12 requirements of the environmental assessment process have been dealt with, or does the government now consider that this constitutional amendment may not be an irrevocable decision?

Finally, the department has given jobs and the economy primarily as its reasons for going ahead with the fixed link. However in my constituency in the interests of saving money the Department of Public Works is closing and perhaps bulldozing three buildings owned and occupied by the federal government. That is costing us jobs in the prairies and rural Canada.

I am wondering how the parliamentary secretary can justify closing buildings in my riding and costing jobs while at the same time putting money into the waters around Prince Edward Island to create jobs there.

**Mr. Duhamel:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member's comment with regard to the Federal Court indicating that a change needed to be undertaken but when that change had to be undertaken is quite right. However, it needs to be done and clearly now it is out of the way or hopefully soon will be out of the way. It removes the last obstacle. I think we are nit-picking a little. I say this with kindness to my colleague. It was going to be done. It needed to be done. It has been done and this has been the appropriate path to follow.

With respect to irrevocable decisions, any decision undertaken by man or woman is not irrevocable. We are about to make a constitutional change. We are in the process of doing so. It is

quite possible to do so and I consider this one appropriate. I consider it necessary and I argued that in my remarks.

(1555)

With respect to the environmental questions I know of no project that has sustained as much scrutiny as this one. I indicated in my remarks that nothing is perfect. Certain things could have been overlooked. I admit that. I am not foolish to that point. However, there were over 90 studies and over 80 hearings. Even our colleagues from the Bloc are supporting it in spite of the fact that a number of individuals pointed out that Friends of the Island had some legitimate concerns. The government and the minister have been extremely responsible in this particular case. We cannot go on forever.

With respect to the hon. member's riding, I do not know if those particular buildings are being closed and jobs are being lost. However that saddens me whether it happens in Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Vancouver, or anywhere else in Canada.

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, my colleagues have addressed the legal and political implications of the matter before us. I want to step back a little further and consider the basic premise.

Do we really need a 13 kilometre bridge across Northumberland Strait? Why do we want to do this? Do the benefits outweigh the costs? Can a near bankrupt Canada afford it? These questions have been debated for 30 years, but in spite of the signing last October as can be seen in this House the debate is by no means over.

Let us start by disposing of the fiction that this will be a privately financed venture. This is a typical government project with the deal structured so that bond holders take no risk and the private operators will repay principal and interest out of the complete 100 per cent subsidy, \$42 million a year indexed to inflation for 35 years. This is compared to the current subsidy. I must take issue with the gentleman who spoke a few moments ago when he said that the subsidy was \$42 million. The current subsidy is \$21.7 million. That is from the public accounts. Therefore, we are talking about a virtual doubling of the subsidy with the alternate program that is being proposed.

The interest on the \$662 million initial bond issue is going to be about \$700 million, all courtesy of the Canadian taxpayer. The only difference between the deal closed on October 7 and a normal public works tender is that public money will be spent without public accountability.

This gets better. Of the equity 85 per cent is held by subsidiaries of foreign multinationals, Morrison Knutson of the United States and the French GTM International. I do not know what GTM stands for but I suspect it might mean get the money, because get the money they will.

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While we are paying off the debt the operators will be able to do whatever they wish with the net revenue from the tolls and that includes shipping the revenue out of the country. I have nothing against foreign investment. In fact I welcome it. However, I strongly object to foreign profit taking without significant investment or risk.

Still it gets better. The consortium has to post a \$200 million performance bond, but the premium is being capitalized into the project cost so that the taxpayer is going to pick up the tab as part of the subsidy payments.

If this proposed bridge was between two heavily populated areas or if it was on a major transportation corridor it would be easier to justify. To spend \$25,000 per family to make road access marginally more convenient to an enclave of 130,000 people makes no sense at all.

Larger, faster ferries perhaps with better ice capabilities than those now in use could be had for a fraction of the cost. First class ferry service would not be a discriminatory burden on the people of Prince Edward Island.

(1600)

There are unanswered questions regarding the technical superiority of a high, wind-swept bridge compared to a stable, well designed ferry. The consensus, even among proponents of the bridge, is that any storm severe enough to stop ferry service will also stop traffic from using the bridge. What is worse, even if the winds are not quite strong enough to stop traffic, vehicles will be forced to proceed at a crawl and empty trailers will not be permitted to cross.

If one is coming up from Boston for a load of potatoes and there is no backup ferry, one had better be prepared to park his or her semi until it gets a mite less breezy.

As an engineer I am well aware that almost anything is technically possible if there is a will to do it and if there is no limit to available resources. One takes an idea and just adds money. However, the fact that something can be done does not necessarily mean that it should be done.

Some people may invoke the memory of John Maynard Keynes to justify this massive public expense as a pump-priming exercise to stimulate the economy. Lord Keynes never envisioned a situation in which nearly one-third of a government's revenue is being eaten up to pay interest on its existing debt. If we had faithfully followed his prescription and built up surpluses or at least paid down our debt during the good times I could perhaps agree that more government spending might be of some economic benefit.

Unfortunately during the 1970s and the early 1980s the Government of Canada and most governments in the world piled up debts in good times, not for any lasting benefit but to finance current expenditures. Like spendthrift families, they borrowed

money first to pay for the groceries and then to buy champagne and whisky. They stood poor old Keynes on his head and they put us into a financial box where we have no freedom to move about.

Even if one accepts the premise that jobs can be created at the expense of the greater economy, and I certainly do not, but let me play devil's advocate, if spending borrowed money is an effective economic stimulus, surely the same amount of money could be spent on something which would provide greater long-term benefits to more people. Even the people of Prince Edward Island are not united on this question. More than 40 per cent of them clearly indicated they do not want this gift. This is unprecedented. Ordinarily local people in any community will fight tooth and nail for a government project because they have this perception it is free.

Finally, this bridge deal was consummated in the dying days of the Tory government, as was the Pearson airport deal. It has the potential to be another Mirabel or another Olympic dome. Let us slow down and take a cold, hard look at what we are doing.

The last P.E.I. bridge project was further advanced than this one is now when it was axed by the government in 1969. Of course there will be economic penalties to pay to the operator and to the bondholders if we stop, but surely we can still get out of this with our hide intact before the project acquires irresistible momentum.

The one small lever that we have at our disposal in this House is to withhold approval of the proposed constitutional amendment. Let us leave the Constitution alone. Let us provide first class ferry service in perpetuity as promised and forget about completing another monument to Brian Mulroney.

**Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has spoken about cost reductions and whether such a project is one that should be built for practical reasons, but in particular the cost of such a project and who would be paying for it. I wonder whether the hon. member feels the same way about any federal project that may be built in his constituency. It is proposed that a healing lodge be built in his constituency when there are not many aboriginal people living there nor is there proper access to his constituency. Does he feel that perhaps that project should be put on hold and studied again and maybe should not be built as well?

(1605)

**Mr. Morrison:** Madam Speaker, I concur most wholeheartedly with the hon. member.

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Madam Speaker, very quickly I want to know, and I take it I probably do now, that the hon. member's party does not support this project. The Bloc does, but his party does not. I am always interested in

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trying to see the differences, apart from the language differences. This is what I understand.

My colleague is playing devilish little tricks with the subsidy of \$21.7 million. He knows full well the figures I used were with respect to capital and other costs. As an engineer he knows that. Let us not play silly little games.

I would like to know what is his definition of an enclave. My definition of an enclave is somewhat pejorative. I am sure he did not mean that P.E.I. is some sort of foreign territory surrounded by others.

There is a contradiction here. One of his colleagues said: "Let's have a referendum. We'll do whatever the referendum results are" and the member says: "Hey, let's not do it". Who is speaking for the Reform Party? Is there any consistency?

**Mr. Morrison:** Madam Speaker, I am delighted that the hon. member raised the question of the referendum.

First, it was not a referendum, it was a plebiscite. Second, the terms of the plebiscite were very clear in that they stated: "Would you approve of this project if it is going to be more economically feasible than improved ferry service and if there is no danger to the environment?" Since neither of those qualifications has been met, I would suggest that if we want to have a referendum we should have a real one, make it binding, have it now and see how far we get.

As far as referring to Prince Edward Island as an enclave, the hon. member says that is pejorative. He may think so. He obviously reads a different dictionary than I do.

**Mr. Duhamel:** It is a standard one, English.

**Mr. Morrison:** It is surrounded by water. Water is a rather effective barrier to most means of transport. I refer to it as an enclave in those terms.

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned that maybe it is time to move to a first class ferry service. I do not know if he is familiar with Prince Edward Island and the amount of physical goods and products we move off the island. Our experience with the ferry service in recent years has been fairly poor.

In fact, talking about economic efficiency, I spoke with some truckers today. The wait at the ferry for truckers is anywhere from three to five hours. As many as 50 to 80 trucks at a time are sometimes waiting in line for the car ferries. One can only handle 13 and the other at maximum can handle 45. The hon. member has to understand that that is just not good enough. We believe a link will change that.

When we look at the truckers, the fuel they are burning, the hours, taking a day longer to get to market in terms of scheduling and so on, it is a disaster for them and for the agricultural industry as well.

What does the hon. member mean by first class ferry service? I hope this is not an example.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** I am sorry, the time has expired for questions or comments.

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to speak on this constitutional amendment regarding the Prince Edward Island fixed link.

I would like to stress those words; we are talking about a constitutional amendment. We seem to be slipping by that little bit of information very quickly in some of the speeches we have heard today.

(1610)

I would like to begin by quoting from *Hansard* of May 19, 1992 when the House was embroiled in the debate on constitutional concerns. "We believe that the referendum should be a permanent part of the process for revising the Canadian Constitution; nor can it be restricted to one or just a few provinces. The referendum ought to be national so that all Canadians in all regions of this country have the opportunity to speak on the same issue." These are very democratic words and I concur with them. They are from the current minister of public works.

I have no problem with the construction of a fixed link. The merits and drawbacks of this bridge have been widely discussed and debated in Prince Edward Island, across the nation and in the House of Commons. The economic benefits and the costs have all been given consideration. The environmental considerations have all been weighed. Most important, the people of Prince Edward Island gave their assent in a plebiscite held in 1988.

The problem is that we are talking about a constitutional amendment, something that affects each and every person in this country.

I would like to paint a picture. Members in this room should think of a triangle. A triangle stands on a broad base and rises to a point. This is the way I believe and my party believes we should approach these matters, with broad consultation and moving toward a point where we can get a consensus. With this motion the government is turning the triangle so it is inverted and there is no broad base of representation from the people of Canada. This is something that the Reform Party of Canada believes in very strongly, as do many millions of Canadians.

We are all aware that Madam Justice Reed decided the Canadian Constitution has to be amended in order for the fixed link to proceed. However, the reasoning behind the motion in front of us is flawed for two reasons: First, the motion is too specific. It makes specific reference to a fixed link, entrenching it in the Constitution. Second, the motion should entrench the intent of the original terms of union, that is to ensure reliable and regular travel between Prince Edward Island and the mainland, without entrenching the link specifically in the Consti-

tution. My colleague, the member for Fraser Valley East, dealt with this issue at great length.

I find it inconsistent that this government proposes to open the Constitution and make changes only when it suits its purposes.

I would like to read another quote. On February 3 in the House the Prime Minister of Canada stated that: "No one in Canada wants to discuss the Constitution". Here we are today discussing the Constitution.

We all saw the rejection of the Charlottetown accord and what the Canadian people thought of it. This is just another case of the government's agenda versus that of the Canadian people. The government has chosen to selectively change the Constitution. Canadians do not accept this method.

I would submit that any changes to the Constitution should involve all Canadians and should be approved in a referendum. The Constitution should be concerned with the broad definition of matters rather than ways and means of accomplishing the intent, such as a fixed link.

(1615)

The Constitution should deal with Canada's commitment to maintain communications and transportation with Prince Edward Island no matter what the method chosen to accomplish this.

We are running into the danger of making constitutional commitments for Canada that may not be in the best interest for all of the country. Technology may change. Currently in this day and age we must realize the rate at which things change. We are going to have to commit to this fixed link throughout time if it is entrenched in the Constitution.

These are things that we have no control of and that may change. I can give members the example of the Florida sunshine skyway and the Chesapeake Bay bridge. They have been known to close for months at a time. Are the proper plans in place for this fixed link?

If we are going to have to change the Constitution, it must be for a good and sufficient reason. We have all heard the emotions of the minister of public works. I would respond that Canadians must feel that they are a part of this constitutional amendment.

In closing, I would like to say that this motion is not just a simple motion to build a bridge. This is a motion to change the fundamental document of how our country operates, the Constitution.

This is a bridge over the troubled waters of true Canadian democracy.

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**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services):** Madam Speaker, I want to make sure that my colleague's understanding of this constitutional change is the same or different from mine.

Prince Edward Island 130 years ago decided that it could and would become part of Canada with a certain condition, that ferry service would be provided forever and a day.

Over the years, a number of options have been examined such as a fixed link. There is now a project under way. It was a judgment of a federal court that unless there were a constitutional change indicating simply that ferry service could be changed by fixed link—that is all it does—the government could be in a position in which it would have to build a bridge and continue the ferry service.

The subsidies, as I have defined them for the ferry service, are going to be used to pay for the bridge. After that, there will not be any more contribution by Canada.

Is my hon. colleague saying that the elected representatives of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Canada should not be determining that it is okay for a fixed link bridge to be replacing ferry service? That is the way I understand this change.

He understands it differently. Could he tell me how his interpretation is different from mine? I have read this several times and that is all I am getting from it.

**Mr. Hart:** Madam Speaker, in response to the question, it is my interpretation that the intent 130 years ago was to provide communication and transportation.

I feel that this motion should not be directly related to a fixed link because of what I have said in my address to this House. Technology may change. It is wrong to assume that there would be no cost to all Canadian taxpayers down the road.

We are entrenching this in the Constitution. That means that we must ensure over a long period of time into the future that this will be maintained.

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, there have been discussions among the parties and I think you might find there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

(1620)

That not later than 15 minutes before the ordinary time of adjournment on Thursday, February 17, 1994, the Speaker shall interrupt any proceedings before the House and shall put, forthwith and successively, without any further debate or amendment, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion of the Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs for the appointment of a Special Joint Committee, (Government business, No. 8), and if any division be demanded such recorded division shall be deferred until Tuesday, February 22 at 3 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Do we have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this particular issue again. While the issue itself is a very tight one in the sense of dealing with constitutional change, it is interesting to listen to some of the arguments about what a major issue of constitutional change this is.

It is simply substituting one method of linking Prince Edward Island to Canada with another. While the wording that was initially done was probably too restrictive we now have an opportunity to correct that situation and yet we hear arguments that this is a major constitutional change which is going to shake the fabric of the nation. I must look at that with some chagrin and state that this is not a fundamental constitutional argument.

This is simply whether we are going to change the method of linking part of Canada's inhabitants with the rest of Canada's inhabitants. The term fixed link in my view is probably a bit of a misnomer as well. It conjures up causeways and tunnels and linkages. This is a bridge, mind you a big bridge, but just a bridge and it is going to join Prince Edward Island with the rest of Canada.

We have used ferry service before and now we are going to use a bridge. I do not know why we are all uptight about the method of linking Canadians with Canadians.

If we are going to argue some of the issues we have to be fair. I heard one of the members opposite talk about how the subsidy which is going to support the fixed link is going to be double the cost of the present subsidy.

What you have to factor into those numbers is a capital allocation that must go in with those numbers and therefore when we actually compare subsidies of the fixed link and the ferry service they are equal.

We also have to face the reality that if we do not have the bridge we are going to need new ferries and there is a very large expenditure of moneys necessary to bring those ferries up to acceptable service over the next 35 years.

We are not comparing doing nothing with doing this particular bridge project.

I think we also have to look at the situation and its impact on Atlantic Canada. The short term impact is great economic activity, spending large sums of money. We are going to see 70 per cent of the procurement come from Atlantic Canada which is going to be beneficial to the people who right now have one of the largest levels of unemployment in the country.

We are going to see 2,675 construction related jobs created in Atlantic Canada and that is going to be beneficial. Upwards of 90 per cent of all labour will come from people who live or will live in Atlantic Canada.

This is not just a five-year project and then it disappears. There are tremendous spin-off benefits which are going to assist in the tourism industry. Projections indicate that upwards of a 25 per cent increase will be achieved in the tourism industry.

We will also see tremendous savings and I am sure that the Reform Party would like to support savings. We have heard members of the government side talk about the delays, transportation costs. Any industry that is tied in to transportation as part of the cost of doing business is going to be happy with this project. I believe the estimate is something like \$10 million annually that will be saved by people who are tied in to the transportation side of this problem.

In addition, this project is going to create some very high tech jobs. We build one of these projects and we actually have a spin-off of high tech jobs both in the engineering side of things and in the labouring side where people learn how to work on a construction facility such as this one.

(1625)

In that sense, we are going to have a double benefit, the short term benefit of the actual construction and the long term benefit in tourism. There will be savings in the area of transportation and also the development of new technology and an educated work force that will be able to export that knowledge and ability around the world.

I say to those doomsayers who say that it is not time to go ahead and that we should rethink our position on this project, we have been rethinking this thing for upwards of 35 to 40 years. It is time for some action. This is a project that Atlantic Canada made. It is going to benefit Atlantic Canada. I see the members opposite shaking their heads. They are more concerned with their region rather than helping Atlantic Canada to pull itself up by its own boot straps.

I say to the hon. members, get on board, support this project and make Atlantic Canada one of the stronger participants in this Confederation. Do not try to keep us down on the farm or locked up on the island. This is a minor constitutional change. It needs your support not your negative talk.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's statement.

Being from British Columbia, I was just wondering if the hon. member could explain to the people of British Columbia, with Vancouver Island and all of the economic activity, population and traffic which has to travel back and forth between Vancouver Island and the mainland, how B.C. is able to sustain its economic activity and provide a good enough service with ferries.

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I have no problem with the bridge if it is the most economic way to go about it, but I am not convinced that is the case.

I would like the member to explain to the people of British Columbia how Vancouver Island can be serviced more than adequately with good ferry service but we need this fixed link for Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Rideout:** Madam Speaker, the member opposite has raised one of the unique things about Canada and that is that we can have differences. Obviously the folks on Vancouver Island like having the ferry service. Obviously the people of Prince Edward Island would rather have a bridge.

I would say to the member that if at some point the people on Vancouver Island decide that they want to have a bridge they should approach their provincial government for one.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse):** Madam Speaker, I am somewhat surprised at the way the debate is developing, especially when you consider that, during the election and 1992 referendum campaigns, the Reform Party was a staunch advocate of a Senate based on equality, political equality, which means equal representation for all provinces, including, we were told, Prince Edward Island.

However, there is also such a thing as economic equality. The hon. member for St. Boniface made a brilliant presentation on the economic aspects, and arguments were made by government members as well as by some of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois. I really wonder what is going on? In the country that Canada still is, why should some regions be treated differently on the basis of their population. It seems to me that some would want to penalize Prince Edward Island on the ground that its population of 120,000 or 130,000 does not justify building a link which has been the subject of so many studies, environmental assessments, reviews and even court decisions. Yet, if there is a decision which was based on an extensive review of the situation in Atlantic Canada, it is probably this one. As far as I am concerned, whether or not we like the idea of a bridge, a tunnel or some other fixed crossing between Prince Edward Island and the continent is irrelevant.

(1630)

The residents of Prince Edward Island have made a decision which we must respect. Consequently I ask the hon. member: Why does he not want to respect the decision made by those who live on P.E.I.?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rideout:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the comments of the member opposite. The debate has taken a strange turn. Hopefully as it continues some of my colleagues opposite will

see the wisdom of the bridge, get on line and support the project. I gather that one of the benefits of being a Reformer is they can have free votes. Hopefully we will see a few of them come across and support us on this very worthwhile project.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kamloops—Small Business; the hon. member for Wetaskiwin—House of Commons; the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway—Cruise Missile Testing; the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve—Electronic Highway; the hon. member for Yukon—Health Care.

[*English*]

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque):** Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of this constitutional amendment which allows the federal government to live up to the terms of the constitutional agreement with Prince Edward Island with a mode of transportation infrastructure that is geared to the year 2000 and beyond.

I want to make it clear at the beginning that the legislative assembly in Prince Edward Island unanimously adopted the necessary constitutional amendment in June of last year with the full understanding the Parliament of Canada would proceed with an amendment as soon as possible. Parliament is living up to its commitment and I am pleased by the amount of support from both sides of the House.

Part of the reason for the support is that a lot of Canadians off-island want to link up with us rather than the other way around. I encourage all members of Parliament to come to Prince Edward Island before and after the fixed link is in place, spend a few of their hard earned dollars, have some of the best potatoes grown in Canada; see some of scenery and have some of our lobster. I am getting a little off track blowing up the merits of our wonderful isle. We certainly want it to remain that.

This new bridge enters my riding at the community of Borden. I am well aware of the controversy past and present that surrounds the project. The impact of the construction and the completion of the fixed link will be felt first by the people in my riding and most directly by the people in the community of Borden.

The issue of the fixed link connecting P.E.I. has been under consideration at one time or another since 1885 when the possibility of a tunnel connecting the island was first considered. I do not mind admitting up front that first I favoured a tunnel and I had to be convinced to favour a bridge. I will say that the evidence and public opinion now in Prince Edward Island is very strongly supportive of the bridge.

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(1635)

I have had a considerable amount of indirect involvement with the Borden–Cape Tormentine ferry crossing. My father worked for CN Rail, later Marine Atlantic, as a deck hand and eventually a quartermaster for 32 years on that crossing. From age 12, as many youth did, we would drive back and forth on the car ferries. I have had first hand experience of the delays, of being stuck in the ice for as long as 18 hours. As a result of that experience I recognize the uniqueness of that particular area. Nowhere else in the world will one find the combination of wind, tides and ice there is where this bridge is going to be built.

It is for those reasons that I had to be convinced and looked so seriously at this project with a very critical eye. I have looked at the studies concerning the environment, the ice conditions, the fisheries, the socioeconomic impact and so on. This morning the minister outlined the number and breadth of the studies. I can tell the House of the very extensive public consultations on Prince Edward Island of those studies and of the bridge.

During the election campaign I found a sense of optimism as a result of the project, due to the fact that there would be an expected increase in economic activity during construction and improved transportation infrastructure following construction. There were concerns, and I do not think we can sweep those under the rug, from the ferry workers, from the fishermen and from the people of Borden. We cannot brush them off. They are very real concerns in the minds of those people and must be addressed. As a result of the studies, government has moved to address them in a number of areas. I want to put on the record the way they will be addressed.

As a result of the environmental review the government determined that the construction and the presence of the bridge will result in no significant impact on the environment and the fishery. In order to overcome the difficulty the developer has been required to set aside \$10 million as a compensation fund. This fund will be administered according to the terms and process currently being developed by a fisheries liaison committee composed of a majority of fishermen.

Quite a number of Marine Atlantic ferry workers will lose their jobs. That is reality. The government has made the commitment that these employees will be treated fairly and equitably. They will have first right of refusal for the bridge operation and maintenance jobs. A fair severance package will be negotiated between the workers union and Marine Atlantic. The government will provide opportunities for retraining, and relocation assistance will be made available if necessary. A joint consultative committee has been set up to co-ordinate the activities dealing with the ferry workers.

As well, we have to address the concerns of the community of Borden. That is happening on an ongoing basis. One of the last studies done looked at the specifics of the project relating to SCI's bridge proposal and it passed the test. Justice Cullen of the Federal Court stated the following in his ruling with respect to the efforts of Friends of the Island to prevent the project from proceeding with respect to scientific studies and I think it is important to put that statement on the record: "The scientific evidence relied on by Public Works Canada declared all environmental impacts or potential environmental impacts were insignificant."

(1640)

The respondent SCI and Public Works accepted those findings, were correct in doing so and thus the decision of Public Works was correct in law and certainly not made in a vacuum".

Other members have spoken of the economic impact and spin-off so I will not repeat those facts and figures. However in the long term after 1997 completion there should be economic benefits, savings to transportation costs in the trucking industry and more reliable product delivery for our agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing products. After all transportation is necessary in the delivery of goods to market. We have four years to go. I mentioned in a question to a speaker earlier this afternoon there are major concerns at the moment and major delays in getting our products to the marketplace.

The government has committed itself to ensuring that the risks to the environment and the fishery are minimized. It has committed itself to ensuring that any of Marine Atlantic's work force displaced by the completion of the bridge will be assisted through retraining, relocation assistance and early retirement programs.

I want to touch on one final point. It is the growing sense among some islanders that the link, combined with the possible loss of air traffic control service on the island, could lead progressively toward a diminishing sense of full provincial status. We may need at some point a full review of the transportation infrastructure throughout the Atlantic region, one that will allow all the stakeholders to participate in developing a system that will benefit the region going into the next century.

In conclusion, this project is an investment in our future. This amendment is part of the process to allow that to happen.

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, I am a little surprised because I know the hon. member is quite an ardent economic nationalist. I now find him vigorously defending a project that is going to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of two giant multinational corporations. I find this a little inconsistent.

Earlier the subject of ice delays came up. I will agree with the hon. member that one will get ice delays for ferries, even the

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best of them, that one would not get with a bridge. On the other hand, one will not get the sort of wind delays, winter or summer, with ferries that one will get with this bridge.

The only bridge I am personally familiar with which is in any way comparable is the one across the Straits of Mackinaw. It is often closed because it is impassable in bad weather conditions. By going a couple of hundred miles out of their way drivers can get around but it is pretty hard to get around Northumberland Strait. Again I am trying to look at this from a practical, realistic point of view. I would like the hon. member's comment on that.

**Mr. Easter:** Madam Speaker, in Prince Edward Island we look at the investment and economic activity of this link project in the very short term.

The minister outlined creating jobs this morning. He talked about 70 per cent procurement expenditures in the Atlantic area. Ninety-six per cent of the jobs will go to that area so there will be an economic boost in the initial stages of the project as a result of the expenditure of funds.

Our concern in the study on ice was what ice could do to the bridge. We were assured by all the experts that the bridge will be able to withstand the pressure of that ice.

(1645)

The fishermen have another real concern: if the bridge delays the ice moving out of the strait it would have an impact on the lobster fishery in terms of the waters remaining cooler and the lobsters therefore remaining dormant for a longer period of time. It would have an impact on lobsters.

Studies have clearly shown that the ice delay would be very limited and would have minimal effect, if any, on the lobster fishery.

**Mr. Morrison:** I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. member misunderstood my question. When I talked of ice delay I meant delays to ferries due to the presence of ice in the channel. I was not referring to delayed breakup of the ice.

**Mr. Easter:** Madam Speaker, I will just make a comment on that. Certainly we are familiar with the ice delays to ferries these days. As I mentioned earlier this afternoon, truckers at the moment are having anywhere from a three-hour to five-hour extra wait due to a slowdown in ferry movement because of ice congestion at the terminal and so many trucks moving. Under the current scenario with the ferries and the ice it becomes an extremely difficult situation in terms of getting product to market on time and in an efficient way.

**Mr. Rock:** Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement to the House and I wonder if I might have unanimous consent for that purpose.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Madam Speaker, I am indebted to my colleagues for their consent.

I would like to take the opportunity this afternoon to respond to concerns raised this morning in the course of this debate by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He raised concerns arising from the translation and a possible different meaning between the French and English texts of the constitutional amendment. The Department of Justice has now provided an opinion by those persons who are drafting experts in matters of this kind.

It is the opinion of the Department of Justice that the French text and specifically the word "remplace" is in the subjunctive tense and as such imports a possibility. In other words the French text, according to the Department of Justice, says nothing more or less than the English text which reads: "may be substituted".

I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for having raised the matter. We respect his concerns but we believe they are groundless. I appreciate this opportunity to clarify any possible misinterpretation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this constitutional amendment which the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency put forward under section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

I am one of the last members scheduled to speak. I hope that the parliamentary secretary of the government party will listen to what I have to say. While I will be going over some ground that has already been covered, toward the end of my speech, I will be voicing several opinions which subsequently will have to be analysed.

The amendment in question provides for a fixed crossing joining Prince Edward Island to the mainland to be substituted for the ferry service between Cape Tormentine and Borden. It should be noted that one of the terms of Prince Edward Island's entry into Confederation was that efficient steam service for the conveyance of mail and passengers be established and maintained between the Island and the mainland, winter and summer, thus placing the Island in continuous communication with the Intercolonial Railway and the railway system of Canada.

(1650)

In 1873 the realization came about that the terms and conditions for admission into Confederation, namely the promise of efficient steam service, were not being adhered to.

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In 1877 Ottawa agreed to pay a subsidy for the operation of a steam ferry boat. The *Northern Light* was put into service in the Northumberland Strait.

The idea of building a tunnel under the strait to maintain year-round communication was first bandied about in the early 1880s. However, with the introduction of ice-breaking ferries in 1917-18, the problem of ensuring continuous communication was resolved and the idea of establishing what we now refer to as a fixed link was abandoned for the moment. Only then were ferries pressed into service twelve months of the year.

The amendment in question provides for a fixed crossing joining Prince Edward Island to the mainland to be substituted for the ferry service between Cape Tormentine and Borden.

Let me start by saying that it is rather significant that we find ourselves having to debate a constitutional amendment, since the present government refuses to discuss any amendments to the Constitution which, as noted in section 52 of the Constitution Act, 1982, is the supreme law of Canada.

In a famous ruling, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London compared the Canadian Constitution to a tree capable of growing within its natural confines. History has proven otherwise. It has taken more than a century for us to get around to debating here in the House the construction of a fixed link between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

As much as we want to muzzle debate on the Constitution, the subject keeps coming up because it is part of an evolving process. A country is not frozen in time. It is constantly evolving. The constitutional amendment sought under section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982, is an integral part of section 38 and subsequent sections which set out the process for amending the Canadian Constitution. We cannot help but recall 1982 and the painful memories it conjures up for Quebec. We cannot help but remember the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord and the rejection by all Canadians of the Charlottetown Accord.

This amendment put forward by the government shows us that constitutional talks cannot be relegated to the back burner and that it is impossible to artificially stop a process which, by definition, is constantly evolving.

This constitutional amendment will put Prince Edward Island in contact with the mainland through the establishment of a fixed link. And I am very happy for island residents.

Representatives of the federal government and Strait Crossing Development Inc., an international consortium, have signed a contract valued at \$840 million for the construction of a bridge. It will cost approximately \$800 million to build the bridge, while \$40 million will go to cover interest charges during the three-year construction period.

Since the debate began this morning we have heard the same speeches. However, the facts cannot be disputed.

The proposed bridge will be 13 kilometres long. This superstructure will replace the ferry service between Cape Tormentine, New Brunswick, and Borden, Prince Edward Island.

(1655)

It is a fact that the province was given guarantees under the Constitution regarding links with the continent. Today, a ferry service is provided by Marine Atlantic, a Crown corporation. Responsibility for financing, building and operating a bridge connecting New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island was given to Strait Crossing Development, a Canadian company. The company will receive an annual federal subsidy of \$41.9 million in 1992 dollars, this amount to be indexed for 35 years, starting in 1997. This works out to a total of nearly \$1.5 billion. The company obtained financing through a private bond issue worth \$660 million. The bonds have a triple-A rating, the best guarantee the banks can have.

Although I agree with this amendment, since we are bound by one of the terms of union under which Prince Edward Island entered Confederation in 1873, I nevertheless have some reservations about the project. The cost of the ferry service operated today by Marine Atlantic, a Crown corporation, is around \$28 million. There are some substantial differences here. The bridge subsequently becomes the property of the federal government. The agreement provides that the federal government will acquire ownership of the bridge in 2032. In what condition will the bridge be at that point? That is certainly a question we can address in the House. Does the government have sufficient guarantees that the bridge will be handed over in good condition and that it will not have to invest in extending its useful life?

During the first year, tolls will equal the rate charged for the ferry, which is \$11.05. Subsequently, increases should not exceed 75 per cent of the rate of inflation. The promoter will collect the toll fees. At this point, one wonders whether this is a firm commitment or whether the door is still open for renegotiating rates if traffic remains below the forecast levels.

Economic spin-offs will include about 2,675 person-years of work during construction, or 900 to 1,000 jobs annually with a construction season of about nine months. As we said earlier, 96 per cent of the labour force will be from Atlantic Canada. However, what will happen after completion of the project? Is it back to the vicious circle of unemployment insurance and welfare? Will tourist revenues be sufficient to prevent this?

The government admits that about 420 permanent employees with Marine Atlantic will lose their jobs when the bridge is opened to traffic and that only 60 jobs will be created. This means a net loss of about 360 jobs. Further costs are expected, including negotiating service allowances and funding for

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retraining and relocation, if necessary. We do not have the answers to these questions yet.

(1700)

It will cost \$10 million to compensate fishermen. A federal-provincial agreement respecting the construction of the fixed crossing was entered into by the Government of Canada and the provinces of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick will each receive \$20.4 million toward upgrading their road system. Is equal treatment to be expected for all of Canada? Finally, the communities of Borden and Cape Tormentine will receive a special development fund of up to \$20 million.

Some 70 per cent of the construction materials for the bridge will be purchased in Prince Edward Island. The delivery of fish and farm products will no doubt improve. Tourism is expected to increase by 25 per cent. Are these estimates based on genuine studies, studies demonstrating the feasibility of this project? And the island's shipping industry will save \$10 million a year according to the Liberal Party. I doubt it.

Of course, we must not overlook the effects of building such a structure will have on shipping, wildlife, fish, migratory birds, agriculture and ice.

God forbid that this project become another Hibernia, a project which has swallowed up in excess of \$1 billion in public and private funds to date, for the federal government contribution to that project presented some fundamental flaws as the Auditor General pointed out in his 1992 report. He described the Hibernia project as high-risk due to the uncertainty of prices as well as technological and environmental factors. We hope that the construction of the bridge will not be plagued with the same problems.

With regard to the bridge project, Parliament and more importantly the public should be provided with quality reports throughout the project so that corrective action can be taken immediately, as required. A work schedule should be submitted to Parliament and a special House committee should follow the progress made in all areas—financing, construction per se, deadlines, environmental studies—and report to the House at specific times.

The Bloc Quebecois believes that taking these comments into consideration and supporting this amendment will take care of a long-standing request. I hope that the Prince Edward Island bridge project is built on solid ground because we will be the rightful owners of this infrastructure 35 years from now.

To be a good deal, this project must be accompanied by a comprehensive set of clear and measurable objectives; suffi-

cient co-ordination of monitoring of industrial benefits must be put in place; environmental damage must be kept to a minimum throughout the project and the rights of the fishermen must be preserved during the entire process.

We, in the Bloc Quebecois, hope that the minister will take into consideration the points I have just raised and, in the near future, respond favourably in this House to the suggestion of setting up a special House committee, as major investments are at stake and it is essential to monitor carefully the use made of Canadian taxpayers' money and hopefully preserve steady, structuring and paying jobs for the young people.

(1705)

**Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—French River):** Madam Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the members of the Official Opposition, the Bloc Quebecois, on the facility with which they turn any subject discussed here in the House to their advantage and bring it around to the only debate that concerns them, their only goal and objective, which is independence and the separation of Quebec.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Serré:** I am glad that they applaud when I talk about separation and independence, because I see that you are sending a clear, unambiguous message: Quebec independence is what you want, not Quebec sovereignty. I am glad to see the reaction of my hon. colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois.

They have that knack and I see the rationalization they used for approving this project. They said, "Because there was a plebiscite in Prince Edward Island, we must respect the will of the people". They draw a parallel with a future referendum in Quebec. I would like to make a distinction.

The project in question is a bridge, a link, something to unite Canada and build Canada, something constructive. The eventual referendum in Quebec is a plan to destroy bridges and ties in this country. These people do not want a constitutional amendment; they want the outright destruction of our country, and I will never agree to that.

**Mr. Fillion:** Madam Speaker, I must sincerely tell you that I thank the hon. member for his comment. Throughout the election campaign—and it was publicized in English Canada and in French Canada, in Quebec and elsewhere—we said that while we were here in the House, the Bloc Quebecois's mandate was to prepare for Quebec sovereignty.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Fillion:** We did not refrain from saying and explaining that during the election campaign. Our leader and other members are ready to explain this position throughout Canada.

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Our action and our position today is not to destroy what exists but to ensure that there is some fairness. There was something unfair about Prince Edward Island's treatment. Today, we are trying to repair that error which has lasted over 100 years. So we are also seeking this same fairness for the province of Quebec in various fields and social areas from the federal government. I think that is what our distinguished members on the government side do not like; for once, the voice of Quebec is being heard in this House defending and safeguarding its interests and giving all of Canada clear, precise, unambiguous positions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Therefore, I give the floor to the hon. member for Davenport, for a question or a comment.

**Mr. Caccia:** No, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** In that case I cannot give you the floor.

**Mr. Ménard:** Madam Speaker, I would like to make a comment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Certainly but are you in your seat?

I am sorry. I do not want to make fun of you, but you must speak from your seat. Twice already members have spoken when they were not where they should have been.

**An hon. member:** He is where he is supposed to be.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve):** Madam Speaker, I have never been so properly told off.

(1710)

I want to comment on the excellent speech by our colleague. I could not help making the link with the speech of the previous speaker.

I imagine that if we, the Official Opposition, had done any kind of filibustering regarding this motion, which is so important for the quality of life of Prince Edward Island residents, we would have been criticized and accused of being anti-democratic, of not respecting the result of the referendum, and of refusing to promote the democratic process in this country.

Now that we are co-operating with the government, and I think it takes some audacity to rise in this House to say that, because we are co-operating with the government, we are branded as being biased and anti-democratic and as wanting to side-track the debate.

We must be clear, and this is essentially what the previous speaker meant. There cannot be two types of democracies in this country: one which suits English Canada and government members, and one which suits the government.

The support of the Official Opposition is clearly meant to convince the government to make the decision it should make

for the population of Prince Edward Island. It goes without saying that we respect the outcome of any referendum. After all, we nationalists accepted the verdict in 1980 when Quebec's National Assembly, which was the first one in the country to pass legislation on such public consultations, held its referendum.

That verdict was not favourable to us, but in a democracy, win or lose, you must accept the decision of a public vote. Consequently, we accept the decision made by the people of Prince Edward Island. In the next few years, when Quebec holds a referendum to democratically decide its future, I hope that the hon. member, as well as all the members opposite, will accept the result of that democratic process.

**Mr. Fillion:** Madam Speaker—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** We are not going to have a debate between two members of the same party. Do you have a brief comment?

**Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi):** Madam Speaker, I will make a brief comment since I realize the time for questions and comments is about to expire.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to consider the questions I raised in my speech. I do not want to turn this into a nationalist debate. I am sure that the Department of Public Works will look at each of these issues and try to deal with them, and that a special committee of the House will be appointed to monitor the entire project.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)):** Madam Speaker, I wish to confirm what the government House leader announced last Thursday, that tomorrow, February 16, will be an allotted day. The Order Paper will reflect this designation.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FIXED LINK**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport):** Madam Speaker, to improve the movement of people to and from beautiful Prince Edward Island it seems to me there is an alternative which is safer, environmentally preferable and less expensive than the proposed bridge. It is an alternative that would create more jobs in the long term. That alternative is an improved ferry service.

Let me outline the advantages of improving the ferry service versus building a bridge 14 kilometres long which in winter and early spring would mean keeping a passage open under very difficult climatic conditions.

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An improved ferry service would cost an estimated \$36 million a year. That includes the continual replacement of vessels and building a capital fund for making the ferry replacement fund sustainable.

(1715)

By contrast, the proposed bridge would cost \$42 million a year for 35 years which, if my mathematics are correct, would amount to \$1.47 billion. The difference between the two approaches amounts to a saving of some \$210 million over 35 years in favour of the improved ferry service.

Also there is the question of additional road construction. The improved ferry service will not require such expenditures. However, by contrast, the bridge will require an expenditure of some \$41 million. That is another saving amounting to \$41 million.

Then there is the compensation to the towns of Borden and Cape Tormentine. The improved ferry service would not require such compensation but, by contrast, the bridge requires an estimated \$20 million for the link. The continued ferry service does not require compensation to municipalities. This is another saving amounting to the \$20 million I just mentioned.

If we add all these items the ferry option would result in saving some \$271 million without taking into account cost overruns estimated to be as high as \$550 million and without taking into account unemployment insurance plus training and relocation of ferry workers for an estimated total of some \$25 million.

Having compared the financial aspect let me briefly compare the question of jobs. During the next 35 years, in the case of the improved ferry system there are likely to be some 8,200 person years in jobs that could be created in the form of refitting and building new ferries. By contrast, during that same period the bridge would generate only 2,400 person years in terms of construction jobs.

After the 35-year period and once the bridge has been completed the job picture would be as follows. The improved ferry service would provide an estimated 400 year-round jobs and an additional 325 summer operating jobs. These figures were provided by the union. By contrast, the bridge after completion would provide only an estimated 60 to 80 operating jobs. In essence the emerging employment picture is very much in favour of the improved ferries alternative because it would provide more jobs than the proposed bridge, namely 5,800 more person years during the next 35 years, an estimated 340 more jobs in winter and an estimated 645 more jobs thereafter in summer.

On the democratic process used in arriving at the decision to build the bridge, the public was consulted on a link which many understood to mean a tunnel or a bridge. A consultation on the construction of the bridge did not take place. Actually my understanding is that the vote on this consultation was consider-

ably close: 51 per cent voted in favour, 46 per cent voted for the improved ferry service, and 3 per cent expressed an undecided position.

(1720)

Before concluding it is important to make a brief reference to studies related to environmental impacts. The studies that have been quoted and used were conducted by the proposing department, namely the Department of Public Works. When an environmental assessment panel was formed and reported it recommended against the idea of the bridge. Its recommendations were disregarded.

Those of us here today who believe in the increasing importance of environmental impact assessment believe it incumbent that at least a panel be appointed to examine the whole proposal again, to point out the weaknesses of the bridge and to determine whether the feasibility of the proposal is such to warrant it proceeding.

What worries me considerably about this proposal is what will happen 35 years after the completion of the construction of the bridge when the private consortium will retire and the bridge will become public property. Obviously the structure will be eroded; salt water has that effect. The public will inherit a structure to maintain which most likely will require considerable repairs, and that after the public having spent or invested some \$1.47 billion over the next 35 years for the construction of the bridge. A corroded structure is what the next generation of politicians and decision makers is likely to inherit and what the Canadian public is likely to have to cope with.

For all these reasons I believe the alternative of an improved ferry system would be more desirable and in the public interest.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly):** Madam Speaker, I get the feeling that the party to which I belong caught the government party by surprise in deciding to support the amendment before the House today. I get the feeling that the government party was counting on the opposition of the Bloc Québécois, and possibly even that of the Reform Party, to withdraw a proposal that it did not care greatly for. The comments of the hon. member who just spoke lead me to believe this is so.

I think the government party, the Liberal Party, made promises to Maritimers, particularly to the residents of Prince Edward Island, in an attempt to win votes, 125,000 votes to be exact, not an insignificant number. In making this promise they were hoping that the other parties in the House would not support them. I think they were caught a little off guard when we supported them. I would like to ask the hon. member who just spoke if he was trying to extricate himself from this matter honourably by recommending a ferry when his party, his minister and the minister's parliamentary secretary all seem to favour a fixed crossing. I wonder if the government party could tell the

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opposition if it wants a bridge, yes or no? We are not sure any more.

(1725)

**Mr. Caccia:** Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the hon. member feels somewhat confused or does not understand that the Liberal Party, in keeping with a tradition of allowing freedom of thought and opinion, has agreed to an open, honest debate on an issue of public importance such as this one. I would hope that the same spirit of openness prevails within his party. Certain members of the Bloc, notably the distinguished environment critic, had the opportunity and were able to express their opinion freely this afternoon, particularly on such issues as sustainable development and environmental protection.

I listened with a great deal of interest to the hon. member whose position is similar, if you will, to my own. The views he has expressed will enrich the debate taking place in the House this afternoon.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette):** Madam Speaker, this will be a brief comment, just to tell the member of the government party: good for them if they are free to express themselves without necessarily following the party line. However, within the Bloc Québécois, we had a consensus before the election. We knew beforehand on what we agreed and disagreed. We solved our problems before; then when we came here, we came as a bloc and today we think as a bloc.

So if the party in power had thought about it before, perhaps you could have made promises that would have seemed more sincere to your constituents and today you would not need to appear divided.

**Mr. Caccia:** I am not aware that in the programs of the Bloc Québécois before the election, all members of the party had taken a position in favour of building the bridge. But if such a position was indeed taken, I would be very glad to see it, if the member wants to show it to me one of these days.

[*English*]

**Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Madam Speaker, I am speaking today in support of this resolution not because I am following the party line. However I listened with great interest to the remarks of my colleagues. It is an indication our party is willing to accept a diversity of viewpoint. I am not affected in my decision because I sit beside the hon. member for Halifax and the hon. member for Egmont who are speaking strongly in support of the resolution.

What we have heard today in the debate reflects a very good argument for the fixed link and for the constitutional amendment. In terms of jobs we have heard that the proposal will create 5,300 jobs over a period of three years. Moreover, we

have heard that 70 per cent of procurement requirements will be filled in Atlantic Canada.

We have also heard that tourism will be increased—and I say in respect to my colleague from Davenport that tourism should be considered in this respect—by about 30 per cent during the period of the bridge construction and about 25 per cent thereafter. This is a significant economic stimulus for a province and an area which has suffered greatly in the past decades.

(1730)

One of the members opposite mentioned that the project was supported by a plebiscite in 1988, six years ago. We have also heard requests for consultation. Surely six years and 80 public meetings is adequate consultation.

We heard other members from Prince Edward Island, including the member for Egmont, say there are waiting times of three to five hours for the ferries. It affects transportation to the island. We also heard the hon. member for Halifax describe how she had to party for seven hours on a ferry that could not get across the water.

These are all impressive arguments which have convinced me without question that this proposition should be supported.

I come from the province of Ontario as do many other members on this side. My province through its support of the general revenue will support this project. I have heard several comments today which made me think that in this kind of basic proposition where we share responsibilities, it is not always recognized.

Someone suggested this particular project affected all parts of Canada because of its need for constitutional amendment and the general revenues of Canada would be used and therefore it should be subject to the interests of all of Canada. That member who comes from the province of British Columbia should recall there have been many items of this kind in the past, including a case in the province of British Columbia.

When British Columbia entered Confederation there was an agreement in the terms of union for British Columbia that a railway would be built with subsidies amounting to \$50 million, enormous sums at that time equal to the total general revenue of Canada. That is in the Constitution, just of course as the ferries were in 1873.

We have an obligation along these same lines. When a constitutional amendment which so clearly affects a single province or two provinces in this case, for the sake of the efficiency of the Constitution such bilateral amendments should proceed without requiring even more protracted consultation or negotiation in the constitutional realm.

The people of Prince Edward Island have waited a long time for a bridge. We heard from one hon. member earlier that it was over 100 years ago in the 1880s when a fixed link of a certain kind was first proposed. It was again proposed in the 1950s and 1960s. In those cases it did not come to fruition. Many other

things did in that period, including the CPR and the transcontinental railways. It would seem they were not in the best interests of Prince Edward Island.

If Prince Edward Island has 138,000 people as someone referred to earlier, that is a population larger than that of the province of Saskatchewan or part of the Northwest Territories when the commitment was made to build the CPR or the Grand Trunk Pacific or other railways.

I do not think it stands simply because the population is of the order of 130,000 that this is an enclave and that long term commitments this country has made to that wonderful island should not be honoured in the most modern ways possible. It seems to me this is a very modern way of recognizing the commitment we made to maintain a communication-transportation link with Prince Edward Island.

This morning I toured the Department of External Affairs and saw the communications system it is replacing at very great cost. I was reminded by the person leading the tour that this simply has to be done. It is essential because the link with the rest of the world has to be as modern as possible. Here too we have no choice. Indeed we have a greater obligation, a moral obligation to go through with this project.

In summary this fixed link will provide a stimulus to the economy of the province that currently requires the largest amount of federal government subsidy per capita. It will create jobs. It will give an economic boost in procurement, in direct jobs and in long term tourism jobs.

(1735)

We all know about Prince Edward Island from Anne of Green Gables. All of us should have the benefit of visiting that wonderful and unique part of Canada. In the case of tourism this country is running a deficit on the current account of about \$10 billion. This is an extraordinarily large deficit, one that costs us enormously over the long term. Prince Edward Island is one part of Canada where tourism has been successful. With this bridge it will be even more successful.

For that reason I believe the project taken in the longest term—and here I dissent from the view of my colleague from Davenport—is economically sensible and feasible. The benefits will be indirect and long term but they are important to the people of Prince Edward Island.

### *Government Orders*

As some hon. members have pointed out, the subsidy will be larger than the current one, but it would be no more than the cost of replacing the ferries.

Finally, it is important to carry out the long term commitments that have been made to Prince Edward Island to link that part of Canada with this part in the most modern and efficient way possible. It seems to me this proposal meets those obligations.

**Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette):** Madam Speaker, I am very interested in the comments the hon. member made about efficiency. I wonder if he is aware that water freight is ten times as efficient as truck or highway. Where is the cost of efficiency coming from by moving products from the island to the mainland?

Has the member done any cost study on how much extra will be spent in moving produce from the island to the mainland?

**Mr. English:** Madam Speaker, I have not done any studies but I am aware that water transportation is much cheaper for much longer distances. However I would say that anyone who has waited for a ferry as opposed to crossing a bridge knows one is a great deal easier and more efficient than the other.

We heard personal accounts from some hon. members who have had to wait for ferries. We heard about the three to five hour waits and other complaints about the ferry service. Currently it is not efficient. I do not think we are living up to our obligation that was first made in 1873 and has been made several times since then.

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member made reference to the inconvenience of waiting for ferries. I have waited for lots of ferries. I have also waited for bridges to be opened when they were closed because of the weather. It did not make any difference. It was just as inconvenient and just as uncomfortable waiting for one as waiting for the other.

The hon. member made reference to tourism. If this is going to be such a boon to tourism, I wonder why tourism operators on the island are campaigning to keep the Caribou Point ferry operating even if the bridge is built. They believe the tourists want tourism. They do not want just to get from point *a* to point *b* like a load of Prince Edward Island potatoes going to market; they enjoy the ferry. That was actually brought to my attention by a study done by a noted economist from the maritimes, Dr. Peter Townley from Acadia University who has panned this monument to vanity at every opportunity.

(1740)

**Mr. English:** Madam Speaker, I too have waited for ferries and have waited to cross bridges. However, studies in this case have indicated that it is more efficient.

*Government Orders*

On the question of tourism, while it may be true that in specific places there may be some thought that a ferry crossing is a tourist event of some significance, one does not, to quote the hon. member's words, feel like a sack of potatoes on a ferry. I would think the majority of tourists would dissent from that view.

It certainly seems to be true that the people of Prince Edward Island dissent from that view. There will be more tourism. There will be more economic activity. All of the studies seem to confirm that view. The people of Prince Edward Island expressed that view in the plebiscite.

In that respect the hon. member may have a particular case, but it is not the general case.

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster):** Madam Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to participate in this debate on the amendment to the Canadian Constitution as it relates to the Prince Edward Island terms of union.

I have had two occasions to visit Prince Edward Island. My stays were not long enough. The first time I arrived by air and the second time I arrived on the island by ferry.

The island is beautiful. The residents of Prince Edward Island have much to be proud of. There are a lot of farmers on the island. Earlier we heard from the hon. member for Malpeque whom I notice has the same problem as I do in that he forgets to button up his jacket when he is speaking before the House. It must be a weakness of those of us who have earned our living by farming. I would also just mention that the best bowl of clam chowder I have ever had was in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

I am not opposed to Charlottetown. I am not opposed to Prince Edward Island. I am not opposed to building and I am not even opposed to this project in principle. However I believe it is time to look at the process, to look at cost and to assess whether this is the right decision for Canada at this time.

Some constitutional issues have been brought forward by other speakers, particularly from our caucus. I totally concur with the member for Calgary West who questioned why this was such an important issue but Senate reform had to be put on the back burner.

Senate reform seems to be taboo in the House as far as the government is concerned, while amendments to the Constitution that affect Prince Edward Island, that have affected New Brunswick in relation to language laws in the last Parliament seem to be no problem whatsoever. The discussion on property rights in this House seems to be taboo and cannot be brought forward. However the principle of aboriginal self-government seems to be quite appropriate and has been discussed at length in this House.

I do not want to dwell on constitutional issues. I believe the fiscal crunch facing Canada is the priority for most Canadians. I would like to make my address primarily on the fiscal aspects of this project and the prioritization we as Canadians and we as members of Parliament need to expose ourselves to.

Megaprojects are wonderful. They grab headlines. A megaproject was completed in my riding. It had been promised for many elections before it was completed. Finally in the 1988 election it was promised and actually was completed, at considerably more cost than was projected I might add. In fact governments have been trying to opt out of funding this megaproject because they were not able to meet the estimated cost of the project. However megaprojects do grab headlines. They are vote getters and attention getters.

Unfortunately tax relief for the middle class does not seem to be as popular. It does not seem to get the headlines. Therefore politicians and governments tend to forget about that aspect when projecting the business of this House and introducing orders and bills.

A few thousand very costly jobs seem to be quite an attention getter. From what I am able to determine the cost of each job created, and these are just temporary jobs by the way, is approximately \$310,000 per person year. That is a pretty rich plan if you ask me.

However long term low unemployment as a strategy does not seem to be attainable by this government. It seems to be a much lower priority. Oftentimes it seems to be forgotten. We all know that the private sector is the job creator and the way to create jobs is to reduce the tax burden on our private and small businesses so they can generate jobs and lower the unemployment situation which is intolerably high.

(1745)

Hibernia is another megaproject—no problem. As an attention getter, a vote buyer it is going ahead. However, can we put a cap on federal spending? No, that is just unreasonable. We have to forget that.

I believe it is time that the government laid out in frank terms its priorities to all Canadians. We have had a lot of motherhood and apple pie stuff. A lot of it is in the famous red book. The naked truth is that as a nation we are over \$500 billion in debt. That is over half a trillion dollars in debt and it is not a time when we can say we would like to do this or that. Rather, it is a time of deciding what we must do to maintain a reasonable standard of living and pass on a heritage to our children of which they can be truly proud.

It is time that we as leaders of our country must listen to Canadians to find out what their priorities are and then try to represent those priorities in this House in the legislation we support and in the decisions we make.

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For the past few years Reformers have been listening very closely to Canadians to try to determine what those priorities might be. We think we have come pretty close to sensing what Canadians feel is important and what they would be prepared to see go by the way, at least for the time being. After all, I would remind this House that our caucus has grown from one member to 52. That was no small feat and no accident. It came from listening to Canadians and accurately representing their concerns in the election and we are responsible to also represent those concerns in this House.

Let me presume that the priorities of Canadians are also the priorities of Canadians on Prince Edward Island. I know that my comments do not remain in this assembly. The people of Prince Edward Island are watching me. I am not concerned about that because I think the aspirations of the people of Prince Edward Island are not that different than the aspirations of most Canadians. I want to talk about the priorities that I believe are the priorities of the residents of Prince Edward Island.

I know that most Canadians place a high priority on health care. I would just like to relate a little about what is happening in my own province of Saskatchewan. We had governments that liked to build monuments, that liked to build hospitals. We probably have more hospitals per capita in our province than in any other part of Canada. Unfortunately, we now have no money to operate those hospitals. Our priorities were probably wrong. In fact, I am sure they were wrong.

I wonder if the residents of Prince Edward Island would trade away their health care system to have a bridge to the mainland. It is an interesting thought and I have not heard that thought being represented by members on the opposite side.

Also, there is concern for the need for funding of ongoing education, particularly post-secondary education. It is important for young people in every province of Canada, including Prince Edward Island.

Do we want to build a bridge for the young people of Prince Edward Island so they can drive across that bridge and go into the United States to find quality post-secondary education? Or are we going to place a high priority on education within our own country even if it means not expending funds to build a bridge from New Brunswick to the island?

I think of quality of life for our senior citizens. I would like to ask senior citizens if they would be prepared to trade their Canada pension plan for a bridge or financial security in retirement years for another megaproject. These are the types of decision, the types of priorities we need to weigh in our minds.

Being a small business person, a farmer, I have to weigh the benefits of seeing megaprojects go forward or seeing a tax

structure which I can live and prosper within and make reasonable profits for my business.

Canada is facing this fiscal crisis and if we as individuals were in exactly the same situation we would be very prudent to make wise decisions. Unfortunately, governments do not always make those types of wise decisions. Quite often they are thinking about buying a yacht rather than keeping up with the mortgage payments. As the Canadian government, we must not only maintain the mortgage payments but we need to reduce the deficit so that the mortgage does not become totally uncontrollable.

(1750)

That deficit and that debt also affect the residents of Prince Edward Island and I am sure that if they have a bridge that the country cannot afford to maintain, if they have an economy that does not justify the use of that facility, it will be a sorry day and a difficult thing to explain to future generations.

These are types of illustrations that we as Canadians need to hear if we are going to make wise decisions. We do not want the International Monetary Fund making those decisions for us. We do not want it lowering our credit rating, increasing the cost of borrowing all these dollars that we need if governments are going to continue funding megaprojects when we are past the half-trillion dollar bench mark.

I do not want to carry on too much longer in sort of a gloom and doom approach. I do not think it is time to be down on ourselves but I do believe it is time to make wise decisions as Canadians.

As Reformers we talked to Canadians and said that we feel governments have to cut spending and one area is megaprojects. We received broad support for that position right across the country. Even in Atlantic Canada we received quite a bit of support even though we were fairly new and unknown in that part of the country.

We preached the same message of fiscal responsibility, of placing our priorities on the things that are really important such as health and education, care for our seniors and hope for our young people.

We do not want to erode our reputation of being a country with a high standard of living, one that properly cares for its citizens and one that meets the most important needs of Canadians.

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake):** Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to be able to enter the debate here today on this important resolution of the House, an amendment to the Constitution of Canada relating to Prince Edward Island's terms of union.

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It will allow for a fixed crossing joining the island to the mainland. For greater certainty, as I quote from the motion before the House, nothing prevents the imposition of tolls for the use of such a fixed crossing between the island and the mainland, or the private operation of such a crossing.

The debate today is of great interest to me for several reasons, one of which is that I have a great affinity for the island, an affinity that goes back to several visits I have made to the island, several by ferry and several by air. The people of Prince Edward Island are very kind and generous who care an awful lot not only about their own island but about Confederation and about this country.

All members of this House recognize that not all islanders are in favour of the fixed link. There are many people who have earned their living off the water as fishers, people in the Northumberland Strait, and also islanders who enjoy their way of life on the farm, a good, quiet rural way of life. They are quite satisfied with the ferry service.

I was very pleased today to be in the Chamber when the member for Davenport spoke eloquently about the alternatives that the government has chosen to ignore. One alternative in particular calls for an updated ferry service that would allow for the prevention of some of the environmental problems that the fixed link proposes.

(1755)

That is partly the other reason why I am pleased to speak today. The whole issue of environmental assessment is one that I have spent a great deal of time working on in the previous Parliament and something that is of great concern to me.

The member for Davenport spoke about the need to take into account what environmental assessment means when considering the future of major projects that will be discussed and taken care of in our country.

We have many major projects under way in this country that have not been subjected to environmental assessments and others that when they have been assessed under strict environmental guidelines have been found to be substantially inadequate.

The point that I will come to very shortly in my remarks concerns the failure of the previous government and now apparently this government in dealing with this process of instituting an environmental assessment process that will ensure that we have an adequate response to the needs of the environment on projects such as the Northumberland Strait bridge.

I hesitate to mention the name of the previous Prime Minister in this place. Bill C-110, the act respecting the Northumberland crossing, an act debated in this House in June of last year and

passed by this Chamber, was really one of the very last acts of the previous government before it adjourned for the summer recess that eventually ended up in a federal election and the election of a new government.

The record of the previous government on the environment left a tremendous amount to be desired. I am quite surprised that the new government would pick up exactly where the old government left off, especially on a project in which the one single federal environmental assessment review of a general nature on this project called for the shutdown of this particular project, the bridge. I will come to more of that in just a second.

I want to acknowledge that I believe something has to be done with regard to the access to Prince Edward Island, to improve the access to and from the island for products, for tourists and for residents.

When Bill C-110 was in the House, an act respecting the Northumberland crossing that gave the go ahead to proceed with the construction prior to this constitutional change, the debate in the House was characterized by Mr. Jim Fulton, then the member from Skeena, who had quite a number of things to say.

I would like to reiterate for the benefit of the House some of the things that Mr. Fulton had to say. Mr. Fulton was a long time environment critic for the New Democratic Party. As such, Mr. Fulton served our party and our nation very well. This speech on Bill C-110 at the time was almost Mr. Fulton's last intervention in this House prior to his retirement. One could tell from the way he approached this issue how important it was to him and how important he thought the environmental assessment process was to this country.

As I had previously stated and argued very strongly at the time, the bridge was never assessed by a public panel. All of the studies that the government has talked about, the 90 or 91 studies, were done in a sense by vested interests in the Northumberland Strait and in the bridge construction. The environmental assessment review process that I have supported very strongly in the development of a new Canadian environmental assessment act would require independently financed environmental assessment for projects such as this.

(1800)

Mr. Fulton referred to the bridge never having been assessed by a public panel. As I indicated a few minutes ago, when the environmental assessment review office took a look at a general concept of it the generic bridge concept was turned down.

The Federal Court ordered that there be no irrevocable decisions by government until the provisions of the environmental assessment review process had been met. Members will recall that prior thereto EARP had also been avoided in the Kemano project. The Federal Court also found that in the Kemano II project the government had acted both illegally and

unconstitutionally. We had hoped to avoid that situation with the Northumberland link project. Of course that has not happened.

I want to raise as well, thanks to some of the notes Mr. Fulton set out in the Chamber in June, the case of the Oldman River dam. When we look at that project who do we find there but SCI, the very same company involved with the fixed link. When it came to damming the Oldman River, SCI joined with the Government of Alberta and the federal Conservative Party at the time in fighting against the public every step of the way until the highest court in the land eventually had to rule that there must be an environmental assessment of that project.

When the assessment took place it ordered that the dam be taken down, that it was neither economically nor environmentally sound. The same company that did not believe in an environmental assessment process in that case has not been participating in a public environmental assessment process on the Northumberland Strait.

I am quite concerned about this matter. As the member for Davenport talked about earlier, the environment assessment review process is something that must be taken extremely seriously as we look at all projects in the future. It is a process in which we have to develop some confidence, or the projects we have to deal with will constantly come under pressure from the public. Their ability to serve the interests of the public will be held in jeopardy.

Before closing I would like to put on record what I think must be involved in a good environmental assessment process. I simply want to indicate I do not think we are being well served today to accept this constitutional amendment with so many questions having been raised about the project, particularly on the environmental side. Members of all parties today have raised some of those concerns. None of them, other than the member for Davenport, have really expressed them in such a way that we should not proceed with the project but should carry on.

Again I would like to quote former member Mr. Fulton who on June 15 said:

Until Canadians are assured of what are the impacts of the bridge, if those impacts can be mitigated and if they can be mitigated what the costs are, we cannot start seriously and intelligently addressing it. Instead what we are seeing is the government shoving the project through the House, Prince Edward Island squeezing a constitutional amendment through, and SCI out there with its hand out.

These are very important words to consider during the process of consideration of the constitutional amendment today.

The ideal environmental assessment process in Canada has to take into account many factors. Ideally the environmental assessment process should incorporate some of the following principles. I stressed once already that the assessment should be

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done by an independent agency free from political pressure or influence peddling. The decision should be final and binding.

It really does not strike me as unusual, but it is indicative of what is happening that a constitutional amendment dealing with a structure affecting the environment and others is introduced in the Chamber by the minister of public works whose department has most influence over the project and specifically wants the project to be completed.

If anything, the project should be viewed as an environmental project as opposed to an economic one. The government should not be treating it as another economic project.

(1805)

If we wish to create jobs in Prince Edward Island or northern Saskatchewan, we could find all sorts of things to do just by throwing some money out there and ensuring that it is done. The Prince Edward Island link bridge must be tied into the environment, the economy of the area, the needs of the community, and those types of things.

The assessment of the environment is a very key and important part of whether or not this project should proceed. An independent agency, free from political pressure and influence peddling, should be where the decisions are made. It should not be made by consultants who are paid by the proponent of a project to make the project appear to be environmentally friendly.

There should also be a very broad definition of the environment applying universally to quite a variety of initiatives. The government has yet to proclaim the environmental assessment act. I am waiting very patiently for the Minister of the Environment to bring a new environmental assessment act into the Chamber with the amendments suggested in the previous House by the member for Davenport, members of the other parties, and myself dealing with these matters. The definition of environmental effect was expanded in the last bill to include health and socioeconomic conditions. We must ensure that kind of assessment is also done on projects similar to the fixed link.

Environmental effect can also take into account physical and cultural heritage and current uses of lands and resources for traditional reasons by aboriginal people in Canada. The recent Supreme Court decision on the Oldman dam assists in strengthening the definition of the environment to include the community's livelihood.

The environmental assessment process should also extend the policy and programs. When the Department of Public Works wants to proceed with a project and undertakes to proceed with it, the policy which guides it should assess the environmental rules as well. This is something on which the previous government refused to budge. I am hoping that under the new legis-

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lation to be brought in by the new government the new minister will budge on this one and ensure that policies and programs are covered under the process.

The decision maker discretion should be minimized and accountability should be ensured. In the environmental assessment process and in building confidence among the public we cannot be seen as having a strong environmental assessment process on the one hand and then later an unaccountable decision making process which can ignore the whole exercise that has gone on before it.

New Democrat amendments in the previous Parliament to Bill C-13 went quite far to improve this and remove the tremendous amount of discretion in the previous bill where the minister or responsible authorities were only bound to act when they were "of the opinion that damage to the environment might occur". That discretion for the most part has now been removed and assessment or action must be taken if a project or undertaking may cause significant negative environmental effects.

This now has to be tested in court, but it goes a long way to closing a loophole under the guidelines which was used in the bridge project assessment and open to industry to influence politicians.

Proponents should justify the purpose and the need of the project. Alternatives should be considered as part of the assessment process. What was never considered in this process was improvement to the existing ferry system. There is an alternative view to what could be taking place here: an injection of funds and a maintenance of existing jobs. The assessment process that existed on this particular project did not take those into account. A new environmental assessment bill should ensure that we deal with this sort of thing.

I also believe very strongly there should be a significant public role early and often throughout the process, including participant funding and notice. I will admit and agree there has been a lot of debate on Prince Edward Island about the Northumberland Strait and the bridge, and perhaps even the tunnel the member for Malpeque earlier indicated he originally supported. There is no question at all that the whole matter of public debate over projects like this one is very important. The key thing in all this is that the debate has hinged on economic issues, not on environmental issues.

(1810)

We have been forced to gloss over the environmental issues in the particular debate and not to make our decisions on environmental issues but on economic ones because the government and the proponents have constantly said: "Don't worry about the environmental things. Our studies indicate that environmental matters are not important".

Yet the one federal panel that looked at it in general terms said: "Turn it down. Don't accept it. Do something else". Many of the questions raised in the House today were of an environmental nature. They have still not been answered to the satisfaction of the people most concerned about it. A full and public debate is important but it has to include all issues surrounding the project.

I feel very strongly about the environmental assessment process and what it means for Canada. I also feel very strongly about the lack of an environmental assessment process on the Northumberland link project. I feel very unhappy the government has chosen not to move quickly on a new environmental assessment process. It would have avoided a lot of problems in dealing with the issue before us today.

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for your time and attention today. I certainly wish all members well in their deliberations on this amendment.

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Madam Speaker, my colleague has raised a number of very pertinent questions on this issue. He has pointed out that the new Liberal government has chosen simply to follow the policies of the previous Conservative government. I guess many Canadians will be asking: "What's new?"

He raised a very good point with regard to the environment. Much of the debate in Prince Edward Island on the fixed link was linked to environmental issues. I know my colleague has been very involved in studying these issues. Is it not now time, as part of the environmental process he described, to look at a new form of what is often called green accounting? In other words should we not look at projects in a way that takes into account other factors than cost, funding and financing? What about the effects on health, the effects on the environment and other ancillary effects of any project undertaken that can result in additional costs to the public, if not well thought through?

What does my colleague think of the idea of a new form of accounting around major projects like this one? Does he support that idea?

**Mr. Taylor:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the question from the member for Yukon who has supported me in many of my efforts on environmental issues and for whom I know the environment is very important. Her comments about a green economy are not only important but most timely. I am very glad she raised them and I am very happy to have the opportunity to discuss them for a moment in the Chamber.

For all too long we have talked about sustainable development with the focus on the word development and not enough focus on sustainability of what it is that we are doing. There is nothing more important in any government decision making than the concept of sustainability. If we are spending money on any project whatsoever, the long-term accountability of the project

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not only to the people but to the planet must be a very important part of our consideration.

On the new idea of a green economy I attended a conference a few weeks ago in which the original discussion was around green industries and how we in Canada can develop the technology, the skill and the ability to deal with the new green industries in our country. Very soon the participants in that conference shifted from individual specific industries to the entire economy. They began talking about a green economy in which decisions are made on the sustainability of our actions, the sustainability of our decision making.

(1815)

Development is not an infinite quantity. Development is something that has a finite level to it. We have to be able to recognize that level and work within it. We have discovered that unfortunately on the Atlantic coast with our cod fishery.

We are seeing it in the forests of northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia where we are not dealing with the accountability of our decision-making on the sustainability of our efforts. We work ourselves right out of the ability to continue to work in that field. As parliamentarians we have to start considering green economies within our decision-making process.

I had a chat this afternoon with the chair of the environment committee and I suggested that one of the studies the environment committee should be making is on the whole concept of greening our economy, about how to tie economic decision-making to long-term sustainability in the environment. The chair of the environment committee responded very positively to me in the context of the response to the environmental conference in Rio where they did talk about the need for revitalizing the global economy based on environmental decision-making. There may be the opportunity to begin that discussion in Canada and actually carry it on into the economic powers of the country and not just from the environmental part.

I thank the hon. member for her question. It was most important and most timely.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake but first of all I have a comment.

One of the ironies, given the environmental dimensions of this question, is that in the throne speech we heard from the government about its intention to build a green infrastructure. I wonder whether this is what it had in mind when it was talking about green infrastructure. It is certainly not incontestable. In fact it is quite debatable and arguable whether this motion and the megaproject it will bring about is in fact green infrastructure.

I would have thought it would have been much more wise on the part of the government if it is serious about green infrastructure, and this is a point I make over and over again, to invest money in rebuilding our rail system rather than allowing CN and the CP to collaborate in ways to continue the dismantling and downsizing of our rail system. That is the real green infrastructure as far as I am concerned.

It pains me to hear talk about green infrastructure at the same time as we allow projects such as this to go ahead and as we allow our railways to deteriorate.

If we are serious about greenhouse gas emissions, if we are serious about putting less hydrocarbons into the air then we should be serious about reregulating our transportation system so as to give a bias to rail. Right now there is a bias against rail. At the very least we could make it neutral.

I would prefer a bias for rail because to me that would be a bias for the environment. The government has got to stop letting the railways react to the effects of deregulation. It has to start saying that deregulation has not worked, let us reregulate. I do not care what you call it. The former Conservative Minister of Transport did not want to reregulate. He wanted to recalibrate. That is fine. I do not care whether it is called calibration, regulation, ostentation, you name it, as long as we get back to a system where we are creating more rail traffic and we are taking these trucks that look more and more like trains all the time off the road. There are trucks on the road that look more and more like trains all the time. They will probably want to go over this causeway once it is built, just to get back to the motion.

(1820)

The time has come for us to build real green infrastructure. I would love to hear the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake comment on all of this.

**Mr. Taylor:** Madam Speaker, I only need a minute to tell the hon. member that I agree entirely with everything he had to say. He put it very eloquently.

As a matter of fact I have a great bias toward rail myself. I want to pass on to the House an illustration of what the hon. member is talking about. My mother-in-law has worked for a trucking company for most of her life. She has stuck on her fridge with nice little truck fridge magnets a cartoon of a train stopped at a railway crossing while a truck goes by pulling car after car after car of product. The train had to stop to allow the trucks to go by.

The government's infrastructure program which talks about roads, sewer and water is good in the sense of what it is covering. However there is not a single dollar going to rail out of the government's infrastructure program and I think that is a tremendously sad oversight.

*Adjournment Debate*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** Call in the members.

(1825)

[Translation]

*And the division bells having rung:*

SITTING SUSPENDED

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Patry):** At the request of the chief government whip, the division is deferred until 6.30 p.m. tomorrow.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 6.26 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 6.30 p.m.

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on the underground economy and the recognition that Canadians generally have lost faith in our tax system. Somewhere between \$60 billion and \$100 billion in business transactions now take place beneath the surface in a way.

My question to the minister the other day was whether or not the government was taking any definitive action to encourage those people who now want to move their operations above ground and become legitimate players in the marketplace. Also

to what extent would the government introduce programs that would encourage that to occur.

What is it about the tax system that has upset people? What is it about the tax system that has discouraged people who are hard working, who are running their businesses or going off to the mills or the mines, the farmers, the fishermen? It can be summed up in the interpretation bulletin IT-518 from Revenue Canada. This was sent recently to various businesses and individuals. It gives clues on all the things one can use as a tax deduction, legitimately to be fair, within the tax system, particularly when it comes to entertainment.

For example, this is not an exhaustive list but entertainment includes tickets for theatres, concerts, athletic events, or whatever the performance might be. Renting or leasing a private box at the sports facility and buying champagne for friends is all tax deductible. Renting hotel rooms to have a party and entertain people is deductible. Buying liquor for a hospitality suite of course is tax deductible. Taking a cruise in the Caribbean, the South Pacific or to Greece is tax deductible. Taking friends to a fashion show is also tax deductible. I guess people want to learn how to dress more modernly and so on.

If you want to take your guest to a nightclub, Madam Speaker, or out to a hockey game, a football game, a baseball game or whatever; or if you want to take your friends fishing in northern Canada, northern Quebec, British Columbia or wherever; if you want to go hunting in northern Ontario, northern Saskatchewan or northern Quebec, that is all tax deductible. Generally you can say: "Let us go on a three week vacation in Labrador and we will discuss business". Again that is tax deductible.

I am not saying there is necessarily anything dastardly or terribly sinister about this. However certain people can go fishing, hunting, camping, to the football game, or rent a room to entertain friends and it is done with the help of the tax system. The taxpayers generally pick up part of that tab. If one is deducting up to 80 per cent of those costs obviously then those who are at the hockey game watching the people up in the box drinking champagne or whatever, who have free tickets or only pay 20 per cent of the price, are paying their way buying hot dogs and so on.

(1835)

In closing, after reading things like this bulletin from Revenue Canada is it any wonder that people have become absolutely disenchanting and disappointed with a tax system that can only be described as unjust, unfair and biased.

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry):** Madam Speaker, there are many things in the hon. member's remarks that I happen to agree with. However I would like to begin by saying we know it was the GST in the last three years that really exacerbated the underground economy not to mention the added paper burden for small business. Most

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members would agree with that.

We have taken a stand on this side of the House to eliminate the GST. It was announced in the finance committee the other day that this study would begin right away. By the end of June we will have all the possible alternatives which will be much more fair, simple and efficient.

Recently the government showed it was serious in going on the offensive against the underground economy by taking on the tobacco issues. The changes in taxation were announced eliminating financial incentives that drove the significant subsector of the underground economy. Already there have been some reports of reductions in the volume of tobacco being smuggled into Canada which shows the effectiveness of that particular policy.

The Department of Finance is working closely with Revenue Canada looking for ways to streamline and simplify the system.

I also want to say we have to be careful when we loosely throw around some of these tax deductions as being special privileges for the wealthy. I share the member's view with the Skydome box holders. However, with respect to tourism and fishing trips these measures were put in to aid small business tourism operators. If all of a sudden we were to eliminate all of those things it would cause significant unemployment. We have to be very careful in how we address those particular deductions. I know the member would not want to see an adverse condition because of a reckless tax preference cut in our tax act that would affect an industry which he too is so proud of.

I want to acknowledge that we recognize there are some serious flaws in the tax act of Canada. We take all of the member's specific points today and hope to address them in the near future.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin):** Madam Speaker, my topic is really quite timely given the fact that we expected a vote a few minutes ago and suddenly it was put off.

The other day I asked the Prime Minister when he would announce to the House that the government would not consider the defeat of a government motion including a spending measure to constitute the expression of non-confidence in the government unless it is immediately followed by a formal motion of non-confidence.

It is time to release the members of Parliament from the iron cage of party discipline in this country. I think that the House of Commons is probably one of the most regimented parliamentary systems in the world. We must not forget that we were sent here by the people of Canada. We were sent here to represent the views of the people of this great nation, not the wills of the political parties.

It is also time to debunk the myth that the government must win every vote or resign. The failure of a government measure, even a spending initiative, does not automatically have to mean the defeat of the government.

(1840)

The Prime Minister, the cabinet and the bureaucrats set policy and dictate the course of action with the usual assurances of: "Don't worry. We know what we are doing. We know what is best". The time has come to give the electorate greater say in government.

For too long it has been politics first. Now it is time to put people first. How can we do this? We can loosen the chains. We can allow for free votes in the House of Commons. If for example a vote on a budget measure or motion was negative, it could be sent back to committee and improved before coming again to the House. If the government loses the non-confidence motion that follows that motion, then it would have to resign and call a general election. The people of Canada want more direct democracy and I would encourage the Prime Minister to comply with their wishes.

The Constitution provides for this. All the Prime Minister needs to do is rise in his place and declare that the government will not consider the defeat of a government motion including a spending measure to constitute an expression of non-confidence in the government unless it is immediately followed by a formal non-confidence motion.

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, on February 2, 1994 the member for Wetaskiwin questioned the Prime Minister on the issue of free votes.

The hon. member should realize that this government has done more to champion the cause of House of Commons reform in the first 100 days of its mandate than the previous government did in nine long years.

On Monday, February 7, the government House leader placed before this House a framework for renewal. This framework addressed a wide range of issues this government believes will reinstate the trust and respect that Canadians want to have in their institutions.

On the subject of free votes it must be noted that this is not a matter dealt with now by the standing orders of the House. Instead it is a matter to be dealt with by each party and each party's members themselves.

This is why the hon. member will note that in part VII of the government House leader's motion there is a reference to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to examine free votes in the House of Commons and other important matters.

Therefore I ask the hon. member and his party to fully participate in this process. I am sure he agrees with me when I

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say that the task ahead is to reinforce the fundamentals of the system and restore a more active role for all members of Parliament.

## CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway):** Madam Speaker, on January 20, 1994 I raised a question in the House with respect to the government's upcoming decision on the testing of cruise missiles in Canada.

This question dealt both with the substance of the tests as well as the credibility of the government and the promises it made when in opposition. Although the Liberal government of 1983 had signed the first testing agreement, in opposition it took a very different position.

The written commitment that was made during the last federal election stated it would bring this testing program to an end. It went on to speak about the importance of public hearings that would involve northerners, peace groups, aboriginal peoples and others.

What happened? There were no parliamentary hearings. In fact there was only one northern member of Parliament who spoke in the debate, the hon. member for Nunatsiak. He spoke very eloquently against the testing of cruise missiles. He indicated that he was also speaking on behalf of his colleague, the member for Western Arctic.

I know my colleague from the Yukon has spoken eloquently on many occasions both in this House and outside on behalf of her constituents in the Yukon against the testing of cruise missiles. Of course the Reform Party was ready. It supported the testing of cruise missiles.

[*Translation*]

I must admit that I was really shocked and disappointed by the Bloc's position on this issue. At the same time, I was not overly surprised because Mr. Bouchard had gone to Washington to reassure the Americans that an independent Quebec would remain a faithful and loyal ally, that there would be no change in Canadian policy, that the policy would remain obedient to the United States.

(1845)

The sad thing is that today, just two hours ago, I have heard a member of the Bloc Québécois say: "Now, the Bloc is thinking as a block". If that is the case, it is sad indeed.

[*English*]

Quite clearly there is no legal obligation whatsoever to conduct these tests. In fact the minister himself said it was a courtesy that he was extending to the United States. I suggest there was an alternative. The alternative was to say no. There is a foreign policy review. There is a defence review.

Let us look at strengthening multilateral institutions. Let us look at working toward peace. Let us look at ending the tests of low level flights over Innu lands as some Liberals have called

for on a number of occasions. Indeed today I met with Daniel Ashini and Elizabeth Penashue from the Innu nation who talked about the devastating impact of these tests over their lands.

Let us support the World Court project. The World Court project is a very important project in which Canada is being called on to join in submitting a legal brief to the International Court of Justice making the use of nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

Those are the kinds of alternatives that the government could have had. Those are the kinds of alternatives that would have meant that we had a truly independent foreign policy. In fact retired U.S. Admiral Eugene Carroll, one of the most respected commentators on this question, said that any decision by the Liberal government to end the testing would be viewed as "an assertion of Canada's independence" and have no negative ramifications.

That is what we thought the Liberals were promising in opposition. That is what they talked about in their red book. Certainly that is not what they deliver.

Let us hope these tests will be the last tests and that Canada will have an independent foreign policy based on peace and preservation of the environment and a respect for aboriginal peoples and northerners.

**Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, when I was in opposition and asked questions of the government I never got any answers. I can tell the hon. member that he is going to get an answer. In fact he has answered his own question so I really could sit down now.

However, I will say that in 1993, two months before the election took place, the hon. member would know that the previous government authorized these tests. They were due to take place on January 25, 1994. After this government came to power and while in opposition we promised a parliamentary debate on this subject.

**Mr. Robinson:** Public hearings.

**Mr. Mifflin:** We promised a debate on this subject. When the government was formed we had a debate on it in a reasonable time, on January 26 as a matter of fact. Twenty-nine members participated in the debate and 30 or so participated in question and comment.

I have to tell members that the preponderance of the debate and the comment was in favour of testing. As a result, the government made the decision and on February 3 announced that the test would be authorized to continue. We expect they will be done this month.

At the same time, the government made it clear to the United States government that it should not presuppose any outcome of the parliamentary debate and the public hearings on both the defence policy and the foreign policy which will address, and the hon. member is right, the very strong feelings still in this

country on testing. This is one of the subjects that will be addressed.

I remind the hon. member that as the quarterback parliamentary secretary for this debate I promised to get him on about 7.30 and in fact he got on at 7.43. I am sure he appreciated the co-operation and the credibility of the government.

[Translation]

#### ELECTRONIC HIGHWAY

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve):** Madam Speaker, I would have liked the Minister of Industry to be with us. I am sure his parliamentary secretary is very competent, but I would have liked him to be present since I asked him a question on the electronic highway on February 4 and the minister was rather evasive and tight-lipped on this issue. The population is rather concerned about this, as we do not really know where the government is going. We are under the impression that the Minister of Industry is not really in on it and that he has his foot on the brakes.

(1850)

The information highway is a very important issue, for it is a great adventure that could link all Canadians with national and international networks that could give us access to hospital and school data banks and to all kinds of information.

It is an important issue that needs to be debated. I would have liked to ask the minister because whenever we ask him about it in the House, we get the impression that he leaves everything to the private sector and that he does not intend to spend government funds on this.

When we look at what is happening in the United States, we can see that if Canada, which has a very good track record in the technology, communications and telecommunications sectors, is to enter the information highway, the minister should give clear indications and invest money.

I was concerned to hear that he wanted to set up an advisory committee. My concern is that this issue was examined last year by another committee chaired by Mr. Ostry, the president of TV Ontario, who tabled a report outlining very clearly the legislative and regulatory measures the government must take to build this electronic highway.

I am wondering if the minister, who is acting a little slowly on this issue, is not trying to divert our attention by striking a new advisory committee whose mandate is still unclear. I hope that the parliamentary secretary will be able to tell us exactly what this committee is supposed to do. What are the government's intentions? Will public funds be made available? Will he be able to gather around the same table representatives of the private,

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institutional and public sectors to finally turn the information highway into a reality?

I would like to give him a warning, Madam Speaker, since this electronic highway could also become a very effective instrument of centralization through its impact on education and training.

I hope that we can rely on the parliamentary secretary to speak on behalf of the minister and promise this House on his honour that, in building the electronic highway, the government will respect areas of provincial jurisdiction and ensure that communications linking us to Internet are also in French. I know that is one of his concerns. Having said that, I will now let him have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry):** Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying to the hon. member that I can assure him that the Minister of Industry does not have his foot on the brakes on this particular issue. In fact, it is quite the reverse. He has the pedal right to the metal, as they say, and we are going full bore on this particular issue of the electronic highway.

I want to remind the House that, first of all, it was announced in the speech from the throne that we were going to develop a strategy for Canada's information highway. On February 2 the secretary of state for science and technology committed the federal government to a number of objectives and principles to guide and develop the approach.

We talked about the advisory council because it is a very important issue. It is a complex issue and we wanted to make sure that the council would have a broad range of groups and organizations that would help formulate Canada's strategy in this particular area. Also, we want to make sure that there is representation from not just industry but from labour, education and consumers.

The council, which is in the process of being put together right now, will be announced very soon. This council will provide advice to the government and it is going to be active on line. I can tell the member that this government is putting incredible resources behind the information highway, the electronic highway.

I can speak about our own case in which we are beginning to put information out. In the Toronto region we are doing some testing which will go into other regions. We are looking at ideas for community access centres. Let me reassure the member that this government is committed in a very serious way and will be moving very fast. We welcome his input.

(1855)

#### HEALTH CARE

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a question that I asked the Minister of Health on February 10,

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1994 on health care and on her position on the reduction of taxes on alcohol products which the Distillers Association of Canada the day after the reduction of taxes on cigarettes began to advocate for.

The response to that question was in effect no comment. The response of the Minister of Health to the reduction of taxes on cigarettes was in effect no comment. The reaction of the Minister of Health to the proposed federal idea of taxing the health benefits of employees was in effect no comment.

This is not good enough for the future of health care in this country. Within the next two years we will be undertaking a very comprehensive discussion right across the country on the future of the health care system. It seems to me that the Minister of Health by refusing to take a stand, including a response to my question on her position on the reduction of taxes on alcohol, is not being an advocate for health care in this country.

The lowering of federal tax on cigarette products clearly is going to be a major cost to the economy. The estimates are that over some \$300 million a year will be added to the federal deficit as a result of this and this does not account for revenues that will be lost by provinces and territories if they too reduce and follow that lead.

Clearly, when people are concerned about the debt and deficit in this country this rather odd move by the government in an ad hoc policy attempting to resolve what is clearly a very difficult problem, that of smuggling, has created many others. We simply do not have a Minister of Health prepared to stand up and be clear about her philosophy about health care in this country.

We see by the most conservative estimates that the true cost of tobacco related illnesses to the health care system in this country is about \$9.6 billion a year with indirect costs being some \$15 billion a year. Clearly, the refusal of the minister to take a position on these issues jeopardizes the health care system in this country.

There have been many comments on this issue. There are many points of view on this issue. Surely Canadians can expect a minister of health to stand up for the health of Canadians and to be that strong advocate.

I want to assure all Canadians that the New Democratic Party will continue to be a strong advocate for a strong health care system in this country that meets the needs of all Canadians.

One commentator, Dalton Camp, commented that this policy clearly was joining the Reform Party too soon.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is simply is it the government's intention to reimburse provinces and territories for lost revenues with this policy of reducing taxes on cigarettes and potentially on alcohol products?

**Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, the question as the hon. member has said is a very complex one and to try to boil it down to a simplistic answer is impossible.

I will take on the issue first and foremost of the problem of tobacco smuggling. When the Prime Minister stood up in this House on February 8 and announced his national action plan on tobacco he said very clearly that smuggling is threatening the safety of our communities and the livelihood of law-abiding merchants. The problem of tobacco smuggling is an increasingly complex one because it touches on the very fabric of our Canadian identity which is dedicated to peace, order and good government. It touches on the safety of our communities. It touches on respect for law and order. It also affected the economy and, as the hon. member mentioned before, the health of Canadians.

Organized crime networks have been responsible for 95 per cent of the tobacco smuggling that was going on in Canada. They were also responsible for smuggling liquor, drugs and firearms at the same time. Tobacco and alcohol were controlled drugs as were firearms. We would have lost control over these controlled substances if we had not done something immediately to deal with that smuggling and to deal with the smuggling of liquor.

In order to deal with the matter the government took unprecedented action. I want to remind the hon. member that the issue is not a new one. It has been going on for years. The past government tended to ignore it and to pretend it did not occur. We took immediate unprecedented action. We increased the number of RCMP and customs officials dedicated to fighting tobacco smuggling. They are using new strategies. They are accompanying these resources with other strategies to crack down and to keep surveillance on smugglers starting immediately.

The hon. member talked about the lack of a response from the Minister of Health on this matter. The Minister of Health is responsible and has worked very hard for the major health strategy found here. We have invested about \$185 million in funds from taxing the tobacco industry. They will be dedicated to prevention and promotion. We have already seen the launch of a media campaign aimed at kids, the proclamation of the Tobacco Sales to Young Persons Act, and legislation to eliminate kiddie packs, to increase the age and to crack down on sale to minors. The minister has responded.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu):** I am sorry but the time for the member's response has expired.

It being 7 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

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