

Government Orders

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.