

It is a very serious question we are dealing with today in this bill. The Charlottetown *Guardian* and *The Globe and Mail* tried to lighten things up a little bit and held a contest to name the bridge. Some names reflected one's prejudices and some were quite humorous. One name submitted to *The Globe and Mail* was "A Faster Way to Leave New Brunswick Bridge".

The francophone entry to *The Globe and Mail* was *La chaussée vers la patate* which roughly translates into "a pathway to potato land". We have that to consider if the bridge is built. One of the entrants to *The Guardian* was "Coyote Alley". Apparently we are being infiltrated by coyotes lately and this I guess to one person's mind will increase our coyote population on Prince Edward Island. There were some very nice names too, the "Garden Gate Bridge" and the "Northumberland Bridge" and so on.

It seems some people are rightly having a little humour with this particular project. Maybe it is time to lighten up a little bit about it. However because it is probably the biggest engineering project ever in Canada, we have to take it very seriously these days. I know if we had gone with the causeway 30-odd years ago, we would really have some problems today with a stone causeway projecting out into the Northumberland Strait for miles on both sides.

The Northumberland Strait crossing project, or as it is commonly called, the fixed link, is without a doubt the single most important project to be undertaken involving Prince Edward Island since the province joined the Canadian Confederation. It is an issue so monumental in scope and so great in potential for economic and social change, it is difficult to grasp the magnitude of the impact that this project could have on maritime Canada, in particular on Prince Edward Island.

Because of its potential impact, it has been necessary to study this project with considerable intensity. Studied indeed it has been. It is estimated that over 90 studies have been conducted on various aspects of the project, most in the past five or six years.

Government Orders

I have a list of studies which have been done on the Northumberland Strait project since 1987. There have been 55 by Public Works Canada on the Northumberland Strait crossing project itself. Nineteen studies have been done by Public Works Canada for the Northumberland Strait bridge project and the concept assessment supplement supporting documents. FEARO and related reports have done four studies. There were three miscellaneous reports, seven Environment Canada and related documents, and four Strait Crossing Incorporated and related reports.

In the past number of years, over 90 studies have been completed on this particular project. That does not include the days when the causeway was being considered or the days when the tunnel was considered back at the turn of the century and earlier.

Since the time Prince Edward Island became a British colony in 1767, the question of a transportation and communication link to the mainland has been bandied about. From the 1830s onward summer steam vessels and winter ice boats provided a spasmodic kind of service between Prince Edward Island and various points in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

When the Charlottetown conference in 1864 was called, it was intended to be a discussion of maritime union. One of the items on the agenda was a transportation and communication link to the mainland. Even though the Charlottetown conference actually gave birth to the concept of Confederation, the issue of P.E.I.'s link was a major consideration in deciding whether the province would or would not join.

As things turned out, P.E.I. did not join in 1864 and discussions continued on the terms under which we would become a part of Canada. The issue of a transportation and communication link continued to be a major factor in the decision-making process.

When Prince Edward Island finally became a province of Canada in the spring of 1873, one of the terms of Confederation dealt with the link. In it Canada assumed a constitutional obligation to provide a continuous connection to the mainland. The terms of union clause reads: