

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.

Government Orders

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