

Government Orders

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 hospital-ity 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.