

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

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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.