

A few days ago I spoke in the House about the need for continued equalization payments to help the poorer areas of Canada carry on while they develop their economies. This fixed link project is one of the major construction projects in Canada today. When it is completed it will leave the lasting effect of an improved transportation system in our area.

The benefits will not only be immediate as we enjoy this influx of capital into our economy. They will flow to us for many years to come. The construction itself will create a pool of expertise in Atlantic Canada which will be in demand around the world for similar projects. The bridge itself will initiate a stability in our marketplace that is not there at the present time. In the future people can plan, schedules can be set, and products can get to market.

The last number of years have not been bright in Atlantic Canada. Our unemployment rate is the highest of any region. I also said a few days ago that there was not a politician in Atlantic Canada who would not be happy to see equalization funds flowing out of our region to help other areas of Canada rather than flowing in to bring us up to national standards. That is what this project is about. It is about creating opportunity for Atlantic Canada. It is about creating the opportunity which will allow Prince Edward Island and the rest of Atlantic Canada to stand on their own two feet.

We have tremendous resources in our region. We live within a one-day drive of millions of people who are looking for quality goods and services. We must be prepared to go after those markets and we must have the tools to be able to compete.

Since I have been involved in public life, and that goes back some 20 years, we have heard among other things two prescriptions for the recovery of Atlantic Canada. It has always been said, first, that we must add more value to our products and, second, that we should extend the length of our tourist season. Both these will become easier when the completion of the link and the improved transportation network it will entail become a reality.

The construction of this bridge represents our best hope in both the short and long term to create a dramatic economic improvement in Prince Edward Island and the rest of the maritime provinces. That is why we in the House must show our continuing support for the project. That brings us to the debate we are conducting today.

Transportation has always been one of our most dominant concerns in Atlantic Canada. During the age of sail we were at the leading edge of the world technology but during the winter months we could not sail very far. The age of sail gave way to the age of steam and changes had to be made. At the time that Prince Edward Island entered Confederation in 1873 and for a number of years thereafter, the link between my province and the

### *Government Orders*

mainland was steamship during the summer months and ice-boats powered by oars in the winter.

The construction of the railway led Prince Edward Island into Confederation. Our Fathers of Confederation were sufficiently astute to include provisions in the Constitution that there be a steam service provided by the Government of Canada. Like the transportation systems of the day that was a state of the art constitutional provision. It made sense at the time to guarantee that the best available transportation system was included in the Constitution. That is precisely what this amendment is doing today. It is bringing the Constitution and its provisions with respect to transportation up to the present time.

• (1535)

There are those who have argued, even in court, that this provision of the Constitution should not be changed. They have used that argument to try to prevent the building of the link. That argument is no more valid than it would be to argue that some of the statutes in some of our jurisdictions which once banned the automobile should not be changed.

The Constitution is a living thing. Constitutions must change and adapt to the changing times in which we live and to the advances and changes in technology which affect our daily lives. One wonders if the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick has been constitutional since the steamship gave way to the diesel powered ship many years ago.

This amendment will allow for people of one province of Canada, Prince Edward Island, to become full partners with the rest of the country. The Trans-Canada Highway in Prince Edward Island will be joined to the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick and islanders will be able to transport their goods directly to market in a timely and efficient manner.

We are entering an exciting time in Atlantic Canada. A new era of prosperity will come to our region fuelled in part by the regional economic policies of the government and in part by the construction of this very major project.

I urge all hon. members to support this constitutional amendment and to bring the Constitution of Canada as it impacts on the transportation system of Prince Edward Island into the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to make a few comments on the interesting speech of my hon. colleague who just spoke.

On this side of the House, it is always with interest that we observe what is being done for some provinces of Canada, especially Prince Edward Island which was able to renegotiate its terms of union with Canada and which today sees a project which has long been a source of argument on the Island and in