

*Government Orders*

In conclusion, I will certainly not be supporting this hypocritical amendment. I suspect that many of my party members feel the same way. I will not support a selective updating of our federation. I will not support a mentality that says some needs are to be addressed while other needs are to be laughed at or ignored, depending on crass political needs.

Senate reform is important. It is a federalist solution to the kinds of regional problems that plague this country and I would suggest that in my region problems exist that are much more serious than some people here realize. Senate election, which I have spoken on specifically, is a partial solution that does not even require opening the Constitution in order to proceed. It only requires a basic sense of fairness. Without that sense of fairness do not expect the support of myself or my riding or the taxpayers I represent. Do not expect to keep coming to the trough to ask for these kinds of favours when our concerns on these matters are not taken seriously.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gagliano:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to inform the House that from now on, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2), government members will split the 20-minute period provided for speeches into two 10-minute speeches, each followed by a 5-minute question and comment period.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I thank the government whip. Resuming debate with the hon. Secretary of State for Veterans.

[English]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Secretary of State (Veterans)):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand and support the constitutional amendment put forward by my hon. colleague from Cape Breton—East Richmond.

This constitutional amendment will have a major effect in the province of Prince Edward Island. It will start to bring to an end a topic that has been discussed in the province for possibly over 100 years.

This is a permanent link to the mainland. In the 1960s we even started the bulldozers rolling and started the approaches to the fixed link or the causeway, as it was worded at that time. This resolution will clear one of the remaining hurdles to the Northumberland Strait bridge project.

Government has made it clear during the election campaign and in the recent speech from the throne that putting Canadians back to work is the number one economic and social problem facing this country. The number one economic and social problem facing this country is jobs.

•(1110)

We are committed to taking every step within our power to support job creation, stimulate economic activity and restore hope and confidence in the future for all Canadians.

Nowhere is this more the case than in Atlantic Canada which has more than any other area of the country suffered too long from high levels of unemployment and despair.

The House is aware that the building of this new bridge to Prince Edward Island will provide a welcome boost to the entire Atlantic economy in terms of job opportunity and increased business activity.

Even more significant will be the long term benefits to the region and in particular to the province of Prince Edward Island. The bridge project represents a long range investment in transportation infrastructure which will almost certainly pay off in increased opportunity and in new business development for the region.

The lack of a fixed and reliable link with the rest of Canada has long restricted the commercial and industrial activity in Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island premier Catherine Callbeck commenting on the issue said recently:

The entire course of P.E.I.'s history has revolved around its isolation from the mainland. The announcement that the fixed crossing will proceed will fundamentally alter the province's relationship with the rest of Canada. In my opinion, that change will be for the better.

The Northumberland Strait bridge project will have an immediate significant impact on the economy of Atlantic Canada in general and in particular on Prince Edward Island. Building the bridge will create hundreds of direct jobs for each of the four years of construction and numerous indirect jobs throughout Atlantic Canada.

Under the terms of the contract between the federal government and the contractor over 90 per cent of the jobs will come from Atlantic Canada.

In an area with high unemployment and needing the jobs, over 90 per cent of the jobs will come from our region. This will provide a tremendous boost for employment throughout the region and will provide thousands of workers with gainful employment and an opportunity to practice and improve their job skills. This will give the tradespeople in Prince Edward Island an opportunity to improve their trade skills.

Direct employment on this project tells only part of the story. The contract also specifies that some 70 per cent of the total procurement requirements will be obtained in the region. These requirements are massive. Thousands of tonnes of cement, reinforcing steel, cable, fabricated metal and manufactured components are needed as well as many other service requirements.