

over 12 years for urgent and important improvements to the Magdalen Islands airport, requests made by my predecessor the Hon. Maurice Sauvé and myself since 1968, to be precise, without someone feeling guilty down deep, when expenditures of some \$5 to \$6 million are being put off or turned down for some four to five years to give that insular population a mode of transport which is the only one, I repeat, during the winter season? How can those expenditures be denied or put off when at the same time we hear that our neighbours in Prince Edward Island—and I am not criticizing what the people of that island get—are being given \$21 million for improving the airport in Charlottetown, P.E.I. That airport I visit quite frequently on my way to the Magdalen Islands. Its runways are long enough for jet aircraft to use. The people of the Magdalen Islands and myself find it difficult to accept those hesitations in making the improvements needed for so long and which are basic to the economic development of that isolated part of Canada.

In conclusion, I would say that rail transport, the first and for long the only means of transport in Canada, is still for us in Gaspé the only one on which we can rely, so I welcome with joy and great confidence the federal government endeavour with the new VIA Rail company. I had the opportunity to meet the officials who will administer the company, and the dynamism demonstrated by its president and his staff makes me believe that this new trend in rail transportation will be a success, at least I hope so. I have always said that rail transportation is the best, the most reliable, the least energy consuming and the cheapest transportation means, especially if we relate the cost of railway construction to the enormous amounts we must spend every year for road construction.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I wish to leave some time for my colleague and neighbour from the province of New Brunswick, the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne), in conclusion I wish to congratulate once again the hon. member for York-Sunbury for this very important motion and I ask the government and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard), before they consider the economic development aspect, to find a way to attract people and industries in our areas where regional disparities are tremendous so that these industries will be able to sell their products at a competitive price.

● (1632)

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Question!

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, if my friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) can be patient for another three or four minutes, we may discuss the question. As has been done by previous speakers this afternoon, I add my congratulations to the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie) for putting this motion on the order paper. It is indeed useful to have an opportunity to discuss matters such as this. I do not think I

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will do it with the same ecstasy displayed by his colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), but I am not in the habit of expressing myself as poetically as that hon. member.

There are three aspects of transportation in Atlantic Canada that are of concern, namely highways, air transport and rail transport. Those are the ones normally talked about. However, there is a fourth aspect that should be mentioned, water transport.

Water transport is very important to us on the Atlantic seaboard. There are some very fine port facilities in Atlantic Canada. We have the opportunity and the potential for further development of them. I am happy that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is taking a very keen interest in the development of those facilities.

One port that is in urgent need of development is the Port of Miramichi. Before that port can experience any great expansion and the potential that is definitely there, the river must be dredged. I was pleased that the government committed itself to making a definitive study of the economic and technical feasibility of dredging the river. That report, which has now been completed, proves beyond doubt that such a project is both economically and technically feasible. As far as I am concerned, the government is committed to the actual dredging.

There are two or three problems or stumbling blocks, but I am optimistic that they will be overcome. First is money. There is always that problem. However, I am sure it can be solved. There is also the problem of the ocean dumping sites permits which must be overcome. I am confident it will.

I want to take this opportunity to assure fishermen on the Miramichi that dredging should in no way affect their livelihood. If it did, I would not be in support of it. I am convinced that the opposite is true, that the river can be used as a very vital means of transport and economic development for the Miramichi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) on a point of order.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I only want to take this opportunity to remind members of the opposition that the budget speech will be delivered Monday night at eight o'clock.

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is very good of the parliamentary secretary to tell us what we all know, namely that the budget speech will be made Monday night. Can he tell us what item of business will be called Monday afternoon?

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I was expecting that question from the hon. member. We intend to proceed with Bill C-19. If