

Government Orders

• (1740)

There are some concerns with respect to icing in the strait. A previous study carried out indicated clearly that could be a problem. We understand, but we require assurances before the committee that the new design implemented with respect to this particular bridge has accounted for particular problems in the area of icing in the strait.

The Liberal Party will support the bill at this particular stage as it goes to committee. In the end we hope it will come back from the committee as a better bill, a bill that is supportive of the environment, a bill that is supportive of fishermen, a bill that is supportive of the workers of Marine Atlantic, a bill that is supportive of the communities of Borden and Cape Tormentine and quite frankly all of Prince Edward Island, and a bill that is supportive of the southeast region of New Brunswick that will benefit from the particular project.

I thank my colleagues for giving me an opportunity to speak to the bill. I apologize for the sound of my voice, but I have managed to catch the proverbial Ottawa cold.

This bill is good for Atlantic Canada. It is good for Prince Edward Island. It is good for New Brunswick. It will be better if the things we have called for in the bill are done. That is what we should hold out for.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating my colleagues from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. They have been continuously pushing in the House for government action on issues relating to Atlantic Canada, in particular to Prince Edward Island. If we had the same commitment on all sides of the House for other projects, a lot of them would have probably been put in place a long time ago.

As a member with municipal background who was involved in infrastructure I had a chance to visit the hon. member's province some time ago to look at infrastructure. He was former co-chair of a task force of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I am delighted to see him speaking in support of the link between Prince Edward Island and the rest of Atlantic Canada.

Could he tell Canadians about other difficulties Atlantic Canada is faced with when it comes to infrastructure? Could he tell us a bit about the importance of investment in infrastructure when it comes to job creation, as well as when it comes to encouraging economic growth not only in Atlantic Canada but elsewhere in Canada?

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the question has been asked. I thank the member for Ottawa Centre because it prompts me to think of something I had in the back of my mind to mention and failed to do so.

People have heard us talk about one critical thing to New Brunswick being improvements or upgrading of the Trans-Canada Highway. Those who have never before had the pleasure of visiting New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island will learn very quickly that we do not have the advantages of divided highways. We are still back in the Dark Ages with a Trans-Canada Highway which is just a two-lane road. It has turned out to be a killer highway as a result.

Coupled with this particular structure is the need for the improvement of highway infrastructure throughout New Brunswick. I am sure that my colleague from Egmont would agree that is the case in Prince Edward Island. The highways in New Brunswick are in deplorable condition.

If we are making a commitment of this magnitude to build a link and then on either side of the bridge we have deplorable highways that cannot stand the volumes of traffic generated by tourists and shoppers going to and from Prince Edward Island, we have really created nothing.

Therefore the member for Ottawa Centre is absolutely correct in saying that coupled with this is the need for a new Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick. The government has promised additional funding in that particular area, but recently the amount of funding allocated for improving the Trans-Canada Highway is very small. The premier of New Brunswick said it is going to take us about 35 or 40 years to upgrade the Trans-Canada Highway on the basis of the money we receive from the federal government.