

Government Orders

and do the residents of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick want temporary jobs?

The municipal infrastructure program provides for the creation of temporary jobs across Canada, including the two provinces just mentioned, the aim being to get the economy going again. However, we cannot continue to let people dream, and then leave them to fend for themselves when the temporary jobs end. Creating temporary jobs causes no great harm, but eliminating permanent jobs is downright criminal.

Currently Marine Atlantic employs 420 persons on a permanent basis. These jobs have been around since 1917. Upon completion of the bridge over the Northumberland Strait, there will be a net loss of 360 permanent jobs. The company will need only 60 people to operate the bridge. Of course this does not include all the jobs lost in the shipyards in the Maritimes and Quebec, including MIL Davie in Lauzon, which builds and repairs the ferries that connect Prince Edward Island with the continent. What are we going to do with these 360 people? Negotiate allowances? Invest in skills upgrading and relocation allowances, if necessary? That is a problem we will have to consider when we vote on this motion.

I mentioned the loss of 360 jobs, but I did not mention the potential loss to the communities in Borden and Cape Tormentine which will see a significant drop in economic activity. A special development fund of up to \$20 million will be created to help them. However, \$20 million can provide relief only for a limited period of time. Then what will happen to these people? And this amount adds to government spending.

A final criterion: fair treatment of all Canadians. As I see it, we have a mandate to be fair to the people we represent. Although the construction of this fixed link is financed partly by the private sector, the Government of Canada is committed to paying an annual contribution of \$41.9 million in 1992 dollars, indexed for a period of 35 years, which, as I mentioned before, works out to a total of \$1.47 billion.

• (1350)

This subsidy enabled Strait Crossing Finance Inc. to obtain financing through a private bond issue worth \$660 million. The bonds have a triple-A rating, the best guarantee that can be given to the banks. Furthermore, the government agrees not to retain from the subsidy money owing from debtor companies in the case of tax default, for instance, so that potential investors enjoy the same guarantees they would have in the case of government bonds.

Once again, I would like hon. members to remember when they vote on this motion, that we were sent here by our constituents to ensure all citizens are treated fairly. If other provinces have a similar request, are we in a position to give

them the same treatment? We do not have to amend the Constitution to have an ultra high speed train in the Quebec-Windsor corridor. One could say the same about giving the Magdalen Islands a new ferry from MIL Davie Shipyards in Lévis. When these items are tabled in the House, we should be as open-minded as we are today about the bridge between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and our decisions should always be based on the five principles I just described.

I want to say that this House should always be very circumspect when deciding how taxpayers' money will be spent. I am convinced that partisan considerations are inappropriate when discussing projects that will be part of our legacy to future generations.

As the Official Leader of the Opposition said this morning, the House of Commons should take into account the democratic choices made by people in a plebiscite or a referendum.

In concluding, I would like to say the Bloc Québécois is always glad to talk about the Constitution.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank my colleague for his speech. I have three questions to ask.

If I understood correctly, my colleague was saying that it was a bad deal. Taking the \$40 million or so which the ferries now cost and using that amount to build a bridge over a 35-year period and then not having any subsidy to pay afterward was a bad deal. That is what I understood. Let him correct me if I misunderstood; that is why I am asking the question.

He also talked about "temporary jobs". Of course, when you build a bridge, work begins and then it is over. The jobs will not continue once the project is complete. But is it not true that there is still a possibility, a great possibility, I would add, of creating jobs in tourism, increasing trade and so on? Did my colleague forget to mention these jobs that no doubt will be created or does he believe that no other jobs will be created because of this new bridge?

Finally, I find it interesting that my colleague, who in a way attacked the project, also said, "Let us be open-minded, because when other projects come up, like one for the Magdalen Islands or others that might benefit Quebec, we should be generous". Listen, I want to be generous with you, but I would like you to be generous in this case too.

Mr. Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the member for St. Boniface that I noted the three points. In the first one, he says that apparently I find it is a bad deal. I do not know if you were here at the beginning of my speech.

Mr. Duhamel: I was here and I listened.

Mr. Guimond: You were? Great.