

Private Members' Business

I think part of building a nation is building pride in your nation's capital and part of that is the sense that many people in other countries have that one thing you want to do as a citizen during the course of your life is visit the heart of your nation, your nation's capital.

• (1720)

We do not have that sense as Canadians. I am not going to blame it on the poor condition of highway 16 from the American border and from the great metropolis of Toronto to the nation's capital. If we do want to build that sense of pride in the nation, pride in our fellow citizens, pride in our nation's capital, then we have to make it possible for people to get here.

Let me conclude by saying that this project for a long time has had the full support of our business community, the Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade, our Economic Development Corporation, all municipalities in this region. It is just another link not only for Ottawa, not only for the communities surrounding Ottawa, but also from our neighbours in Quebec to southern Ontario and beyond.

As I mentioned earlier, the federal government is an important employer in this region. It accounts for about 20 per cent of the jobs in our region. A fairly good job has been done of spreading about 70 per cent of the public service jobs across this country and I as a Canadian am proud of that.

Nonetheless, the public is still an important employer and I believe there is an obligation for our government as it is making changes in the local economy to consider all its decisions that impact on us and to work with us as it does with other communities across Canada in a period of economic adjustment. Transportation, a good road link into the capital, is important to do that.

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Madam Speaker, I am rising in the House today to support a motion proposed by my hon. colleague from Leeds—Grenville.

Motion M-3 moves that, in the opinion of this House, the government should enter into an agreement with the province of Ontario to expand Ontario highway 16 south from Ottawa to highway 401 at Johnstown into a four lane highway in order to ensure road safety and enhance travel in and out of the nation's capital.

As a member of Parliament from the greater Toronto area I feel that it is in the best interests of my constituents that I rise to support this motion today. Countless travellers from my constituency of Bramalea—Gore—Malton and other areas around Toronto visit Ottawa on a regular basis. Naturally they take highway 401.

On highway 401 they can travel in relative safety at their own pace. Passing lanes provide the option of travelling at different speeds. Motorists are not subject to the distraction of someone riding their bumper, nor do they feel the frustration of driving behind someone whose car is incapable of keeping up with the flow of traffic.

The multi-lane design of highway 401 ensures a relaxed frame of mind which seems to me is conducive to driving.

All of this is lost, however, when they turn on to highway 16 to get to Ottawa; gone are the passing lanes, gone is the option of travelling at their own pace, gone is the relaxed atmosphere in which to drive.

Numerous accidents occur on highway 16 every weekend. Frustrated drivers take risks they normally would not have to take. In the period from 1985 to 1992, 39 deaths have occurred on the road as well as 721 reported accidents with countless injuries.

This is the main route for motorists travelling to Ottawa from western Ontario. Thousands of tourists come from across Ontario every year to see this beautiful city and its wonderful sites, Parliament Hill included.

An overcrowded, single lane highway does not give a favourable first impression of the city. This is clearly a well travelled route. We owe it to all visitors to provide them with a safe and sensible route to their nation's capital.

There has been support of this expansion since the road was built almost 15 years ago. Now it is time to act.

As most of my honourable colleagues know, the federal government in co-operation with provincial and municipal governments has recently launched the two-year, \$6 billion Canada infrastructure works program. The program reaffirms our commitment to get Canadians back to work by creating 50,000 to 65,000 direct jobs and represents a significant long term investment in Canada's economic competitiveness. It also represents an important step forward in intergovernmental co-operation for the benefit of Canadians. Ontario has committed \$722 million to date toward the project.

• (1725)

Good infrastructure is vital to a good quality of life. It helps keep our environment clean and makes our cities liveable. Good roads and transportation services reduce costs, reduce expensive tie-ups and minimize wear and tear on vehicles. Cities that work are central to the health of the economy.

At present the only way many of our industries can transport their products into and out of the nation's capital using a four lane highway is to go to Montreal first. This option is clearly ridiculous. One of our government's goals is to make it easier for small and medium sized businesses to succeed. As most