

*Supply—Transport*

**Mr. Chevrier:** I do not want to delay this, but here the two questions are entirely separate and apart. One is the construction of a causeway from the mainland to Prince Edward Island; meanwhile the present ferry services are not adequate, and it may be that the causeway will not be built for several years if at all. What is being done by the government in the meantime? Is provision being made for the construction of an additional ferry?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** We hope to have guidance in approaching that problem from the preliminary reports of the engineers who are studying the causeway proposal.

Item agreed to.

Strait of Canso—

783. Transportation improvements and facilities—further amount required, \$54,500.

**Mr. Chevrier:** Mr. Chairman, would the hon. minister explain what this item is for? It is a large item, \$54,500 for transportation improvements and facilities. The Canso causeway has been completed now for quite a number of years, and it occurs to me that perhaps we might have an explanation.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** This item is required to clear up some outstanding claims for compensation arising out of the construction of the causeway. As the hon. member indicated, it was completed. Actually, on April 1, 1957 it was deemed to be completed, but there have been some outstanding claims which required to be settled, and this item provides for them.

**Mr. Bourget:** There is an item for auto ferry vessel for service between Pelee island and the mainland, Ontario. Could the minister tell us where this auto ferry vessel was built, and if tenders were asked for the building of that ferry?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** Is my hon. friend on No. 784, Mr. Chairman?

**The Deputy Chairman:** No. 783.

**Mr. Bourget:** The details are on page 24, and it is the fourth item, "Auto ferry vessel for service between Pelee island and the mainland, Ontario".

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** That pertains to the next item, Mr. Chairman.

Item agreed to.

784. Construction or acquisition of auto-ferry vessels and equipment as listed in the details of the estimates, provided that treasury board may increase or decrease the amount within the vote to be expended upon individual listed projects—further amount required, \$1.

**Mr. Bourget:** Can I now have an answer to my question, since we are on item 784?

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** All of these transport services are called by tender.

**Mr. Chevrier:** The minister says this has been done by tender. Has this ship not been built by the government for the purpose of operating between Pelee island and the mainland?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** The contract for the construction of this auto ferry vessel is under negotiation at the present time with the Erieau Shipbuilding and Drydock Company Limited of Erieau. The lowest price quoted was \$448,000. The ship will be a twin screw vessel designed to carry 300 passengers and 14 automobiles.

**Mr. Chevrier:** I take it that a contract has been awarded to this company.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chevrier:** And I understand, further, that this ship will be turned over to private enterprise for operation between the mainland and Pelee island.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** Yes, there will be a call for tenders for rendering that service.

**Mr. Chevrier:** Yes. I want to take that a step further, because following the call for tenders the government will enter into a contract either through the Department of Transport or through the maritime commission for the operation of this service. Does the minister think that this is an appropriate policy to follow? Here is a government-owned ship. Why does the government not operate the ship rather than turn it over to private enterprise for operation, after having built it?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** This is the way the operation was carried on previously. The ship had been operated before under just such an arrangement in the hon. gentleman's time when he was minister of transport. That ship proved unseaworthy and it is being replaced by the ship I have mentioned. The arrangement as to the operation which obtained hitherto was felt to be the best in the circumstances, and it is proposed to continue in the same way.

**Mr. Chevrier:** Indeed it was, and I thank the minister for his answer. The point I wanted to make was that when we were in office we were criticized from this side of the house for following this arrangement. That is why I had hoped to see the Minister of Transport here, because while he was not, as far as I remember, among those who criticized this policy and this former contract, there were certainly a number of members who did so most bitterly from this side of the house, and I am glad to see that now the hon. gentlemen