

*Fishing and Recreational Harbours*

As long as the present harbour is not extended and protected by at least one north-south breakwater on the east side, it will remain illusory to develop navigational tourism on the St. Lawrence and farther east all around the Gaspé Peninsula. As long as visitors will not be protected, it will always be a bit ridiculous to organize, at the regional level, off-shore boat races which would supposedly be of international levels. Yet it is the status which can be expected for the lieutenant-governor classic. The success met by this competition in the last few years as to the number of participants is yet quite surprising if we consider there are no appropriate shelters and no services. That surprise could some day change into concern and lead to tragedy should there be an overly great number of competitors.

The economic input brought about by such a touristic attraction as those annual races could never be hoped to have some importance without the minimum requirement of building the breakwater previously referred to. Any event of this kind in our area will be doomed to failure and disappearance purely and simply more or less shortly. Mr. Speaker, in eastern Quebec as anywhere else in the country, summer is very short, and the department's efforts to develop tourism, promote with all Quebecers the taste for outdoor life and develop environmental resources will never be qualified as excessive.

The St. Lawrence is a prime ecological resource and the importance of rationally operating that unique stretch of water to the benefit of all citizens in the province without any distinction could never be overemphasized. The development of a recreational harbour in our area would have the immediate effect of extending by at least two months the sailing season on the St. Lawrence and, consequently, allowing more people to enjoy the healthy pleasures provided by a rationally and democratically operated ecological site. The tourist orientation of the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé area was stigmatized on more than one occasion in past years; the host of various reports and studies on this conclude in the same affirmative sense. The positive steps taken by the department to make that important economic activity viable will always be favourably viewed by the whole population.

The trends that are growing each year within the Quebec community will in the next decade give the Department of Tourism increased significance. The higher average purchasing power, the ever stronger appeal of outdoor life and sports, the increase in leisure time will soon turn Quebec into a pivotal table for Canadian and world tourism as long as we take the time to develop properly the strategic tourist sites. Mr. Speaker, no one can deny the obvious attraction the Gaspé Peninsula and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine have for Quebec, Canadian and international tourism, especially since the recent creation of provincial and federal parks, and we do not think it is being bold to say that that trend will increase over the years.

The Anticosti Island recently acquired by the department will only confirm that trend and further stress the need for the strategic development of recreational harbours on the shores of the St. Lawrence above those attraction centres. So it becomes quite obvious that a service city like Rimouski becomes a new neuralgic stop over on the route of sailing tourists when one

[Mr. Allard.]

recognizes the enormous distances involved in such trips. So we want to point out the urgency of proceedings with the preliminary works and the construction of the breakwater this very year, another step in the progress of this country. So Mr. Speaker, I think it is urgent that the department get on with the job and meet the wish of a very important group in the Rimouski area.

Quebec certainly looks like a late starter in this area, with barely 25 to 30 marinas, compared—I am not saying this out of jealousy—with the more than 2000 which Ontario has, at least 500 of which have been built with the financial assistance of the federal government. I think it would be very wise, if not fair, for the department to do something for the isolated groups who have spent over 10 years trying to obtain the financial backing they need to carry out their marina projects.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the minister who introduced this bill will advise all parties interested in this marina project for the metropolitan city of the Gaspé region and that he will give a favourable reply to this group of Quebec taxpayers. I hope the minister will listen favourably to the wishes of all those who have been seeking for many years the building of a marina in Rimouski. I also hope this bill will make it possible, as I was saying a while ago, for the brave people of the lower St. Lawrence region to benefit from Bill C-7.

● (2030)

[English]

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate, particularly since Bill C-7 meets, in general philosophical terms, with the approval and has the consent of our party and the opposition generally. Discouraging, however, is the fact that the minister himself is not as keen as we are in advancing this bill through this stage of discussion in the House and he is conspicuous by his absence tonight. This is something we do not greet with as much enthusiasm as we do some provisions in the bill.

We have to be delighted that it is now the intention, as the minister said in his opening remarks, to amalgamate the many sections of departments and agencies which were formerly responsible for small harbours and recreational facilities on lakes, oceans and rivers, which now fall under the purview of the Department of Fisheries and the Environment.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, this was not always so. When one used to apply under this act either for assistance to construct small harbours or facilities on shores, or one attempted to make deals or enter into agreements with individuals, municipalities or provinces, by the time the department acknowledged the request, the responsibility for small harbours had been shifted to some other department. The Department of Transport has several times had responsibility for this particular marine activity. Ministers of Public Works have had responsibility on several occasions, and then sometime in 1973 responsibility was shifted to the Department of Fisheries and the Environment.