

Government Orders

How is it that costs are paid by the Government of Canada according to the Auditor General at \$21 million per year and the consortia now says it needs more per year? The government did not want to promise something that was going to cost more than the ferry service. Therefore, it would not say that the ferry service cost \$42 million a year, but it would say that \$42 million a year was all that it was going to pay to the consortia, inflation protected for 35 years.

That is pretty close to what is found in the Criminal Code. This is supposed to be the highest court of the land. We are supposed to make carefully thought out, reasoned judgments on legislation. I think any clear-thinking member of this House would agree.

Here is a project that has never been assessed as required by law in Canada, as required by the legislation we passed in this House. It has not yet been proclaimed but that is the intent of this House. We should vote to send this legislation to the environment committee where we can begin the long slow process of uncovering the truth. Canadians deserve that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I declare the amendment moved by the hon. member for Skeena is in order. The debate is now on the amendment.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I understand we are debating the amendment put forward. It ties in partly to where the Liberal Party is coming from with respect to Bill C-110. We have to keep it in perspective that we are talking about a fixed link. It conjures up all kinds of ideas as to just exactly what is a fixed link and what its impact is going to be. We have to recognize that it is a bridge.

Bridges have existed on this planet since the time the first tree fell over a creek and formed a bridge. I do not think we have the proper perspective as we analyze this situation. It is simply a bridge. We have been building bridges for years.

• (1730)

We have built bridges for the obvious reason of connecting one part of the country to another. We have an obligation to Prince Edward Island, to New Brunswick and to Nova Scotia to have a transportation link that functions and functions properly.

With that in mind, we in the Liberal Party have supported the fixed link for years. I probably should not admit this but when my mother was the member of Parliament for Moncton she turned the first sod in 1965 for the ramps to the bridge. Since that time construction

has been a little slow and it has not really manifested itself in the way we had hoped in 1965.

The time for talk in large measure about whether or not a fixed link is necessary has now passed. A plebiscite has been held in Prince Edward Island. Sixty per cent of the people are supportive of the fixed link. I conducted a referendum and a study in my own riding, and 67 per cent of people in the Moncton riding are supportive of the particular project.

As I look at it, and I am saying this on behalf of the Liberal Party, we support sending Bill C-110 to committee. Whether it is the environment committee or another is not as important to us as keeping the project going. We support it going to committee. There are some questions that still have to be dealt with and there are problems with the environment.

Quite frankly we are disappointed in the way the government has handled the whole project. It has had eight years to get the project on the go and to do something with it. The project should have been started a number of years ago. This government should have done a full environmental assessment of the project in general. Since the time of ascertaining that this bridge consortium should be approved, it should have done an environmental assessment of the particular project.

We are of the view that assessment should still be done. We have not changed our position in that respect. At the same time we are most supportive of the project, the concept and this particular bridge. In large measure it seems to serve the needs. We want this legislation before committee so that all those affected by the particular project will have an opportunity to have their say and at the same time give a full airing of the different environmental and job security matters associated with it.

We have heard comments today about the number of studies that have been done. My hon. colleague from Egmont has listed 90-odd studies with respect to a fixed link. The number of studies with respect to the bridge are somewhat limited. This is why we are supportive of the concept of a full environmental assessment.

There are also other confidence building factors which call upon us to support the project. Former Premier Ghiz had 10 points which had to be met. In them were environmental assurances that the project would not be damaging. Premier Ghiz, as he then was and now dean of the law school at Dalhousie University, has said that he is satisfied. He has put his name to the document that starts this process.