

January. I followed him two or three days later. After waiting a couple of days for the return of that vessel, I was induced, hearing the mails were to be sent by another way, to go by the old route, between Cape Tormentine and Cape Traverse. Now, if personal inconvenience was the only difficulty in this case, of course there would be very little to be said about it, but I can tell hon. gentlemen that the failure of that vessel to return caused a delay, in the transmission outward, of the mails from Georgetown, and also of the inward mails from Pictou to the Island. The former had to be sent a distance of 80 miles to Cape Traverse, the latter by a long circuitous route to Cape Tormentine. On the occasion I refer to, Charlottetown was without a mail during six days. Our mercantile community experienced a difficulty which, I am sure, every honorable member of this House will appreciate—the inconvenience of being without any communication with the mainland except by telegraph for six days, and I see by despatches from the Maritime Provinces that this occurrence has been repeated since then, and the mails have been ordered to be transferred to the old route. There is so much to be said in favor of the route between Cape Tormentine and Cape Traverse for mail purposes over the Georgetown and Pictou route, that I hope I will be pardoned for presenting them in as few words as possible. Between Pictou and Georgetown is a distance of thirty-five to forty miles, and that space, as the winter advances—generally towards the end of January, sometimes earlier—becomes closely packed with heavy fields of ice, and I leave hon. gentlemen to imagine for themselves what the wear and tear must be to any ship, however well and strongly built, when driven stem on through such fields of ice, for days, perhaps. Allow that vessel any clear space of water, and she will break her way through formidable barriers of ice, but when she is packed in, as we have read of vessels being caught in the ice in Arctic regions, it becomes almost impossible for her to extricate herself. She must await the action of the wind and waves, and if we could be aware of the facts at the present moment, I believe that is the position in which the *Northern Light* is now—waiting for the action of the south-west wind to release her from her

unpleasant predicament—surrounded by seven or eight feet of solid ice. This wear and tear cannot be repaired, of course, for nothing. I make this motion, as I have stated, not in a spirit of hostility to the Government, but to show beyond doubt that the vessel is placed in an unsuitable and inconvenient position. I have heard it said in many quarters—in fact, at one time I advocated the same course myself—that the proper way to proceed would be to issue a commission of enquiry to ascertain the most suitable route. Four years ago that commission would have been exceedingly useful; but at the present day, when we have had the experience of two years, and when it has been demonstrated beyond question that there is but one route suitable, I think a commission of enquiry would only cause unnecessary delay. One of the great recommendations in favor of the route between Capes Traverse and Tormentine is the fact that the straits there are only nine miles wide, and that distance is reduced in winter to seven miles by the “bord” ice, as it is called. That ice seldom or never moves. At that point only can boats cross. Everywhere else any attempt of the kind that has been made has ended in disaster. I think the experience of two winters has demonstrated beyond a doubt that the *Northern Light* cannot under all circumstances, contend against the ice. If she could, I say certainly retain her there, but I contend she cannot. Therefore, it becomes apparent the mail service of Prince Edward Island should be concentrated at one point, between the two capes, and I am sure it would be as effectually performed as, under the circumstances, it is possible for it to be. Sometimes it would be necessary to use the steamer, and sometimes ice boats. In the early part of the winter the heavy fields of ice have not yet formed, or have not become packed as they do subsequently. It is then the old ice boats experience the greatest difficulty, and in former times I have known three weeks to elapse without mails crossing. This is due to the fact that the straits are gorged with broken ice and half-melted snow, through which no boat can pass, and on which no man can walk. But under such circumstances the *Northern Light* could run without difficulty, and with very little wear and tear. This renders the situation

Hon. Mr. Haythorne.