

Government Orders

openly, in the best interests of the public and not only of the government's friends.

Given these facts, the Northumberland Strait bridge project is of particular interest at this time. During the development of this project, public concerns were carefully considered. The go-ahead was given only after a very open and public review. The deal was signed only after financial soundness was ascertained.

Virtually all the risks associated with the construction and operation of the facility will be borne by the promoter. The fare structure and the appropriate fees will be carefully regulated through federal legislation. Our government is firmly committed to supporting the renewal of this country's infrastructure both in terms of job creation and in terms of enhancing our long term efficiency and competitiveness.

The President of the Treasury Board, who is at the helm of our infrastructure program, publicly invited the private sector to take an active part in this initiative. With this new approach, I think that we have every reason to regard the fixed link project as an excellent model of joint venture implementation and public interest protection. This project has undergone an extremely stringent and comprehensive environmental assessment.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to add a few words to what the minister said about how great the project is with regard to the environment. Much has been written on this issue. For the best part of the five years it took to develop the project, environmental considerations have been the primary concern of both the government and the promoter. Of course, this project has been subjected to the most thorough environmental assessment ever conducted on a project of this magnitude. In fact, 90 analyses were carried out, as the minister pointed out this morning, of the impact the bridge will have on the environment. Ten thousand people from both sides of the strait were consulted, and the discussions were very open and honest. The people have had many opportunities to speak on the requirements of the project during the 90 or so public hearings that were held.

• (1335)

The project meets all the technical and environmental requirements.

Let me remind you, if I may, of the result of the last court challenge: the Federal Court concluded that the government's environmental assessment process had been much more thorough than required.

I think that this project will be well received by the people for whom it is so very important that we pay close attention not only

to the technical quality of construction but also to the protection of the environment.

That is also why I am sure that this project will set new standards in terms of public consultation and care for the environment.

I am especially pleased to notice that even if construction has already started, this crucial question will continue to be a central concern for the promoter as well as for the federal and provincial regulatory agencies.

The contractor will have to follow a very strict environmental management and protection plan. The project will be continually monitored to ensure that it remains environment friendly.

I fully support this project not only because it is a good thing, but also because it generates substantial economic activity as well as much needed jobs and, more important, it is environment friendly.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans): Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons is being called on today to approve or reject a government motion to amend the Constitution of Canada under section 43.

This section enables the House of Commons and a particular province to amend the Constitution on various points which, in my opinion, are very diversified and wide-ranging. It would have been interesting if the Canadian government and the provinces had found enabling procedures for Quebec when it wanted to endorse the 1982 Constitution Act through the Meech Lake Accord, in order to become an equal partner.

During this speech, if I may, I would like to go back to the Constitution, because that is what we are dealing with here, despite the fact that the Prime Minister does not want to talk about it any more. I would now like to raise some issues relating to Bill C-110, that passed third reading in September 1993.

Some Islanders have been worried about the fixed or mobile link with Canada's mainland for many years, ever since Prince Edward Island joined Confederation. Others prefer to keep the island as it is and to lead quiet lives in the country of their ancestors.

Our fellow citizens in Prince Edward Island wanted a link with the mainland so badly that they decided a few years ago to settle this issue in a plebiscite. This plebiscite, held in January 1988, showed that a majority favoured the establishment of a fixed link between the Island and the mainland.

• (1340)

No one in the government or the Official Opposition is against the will of the population. But let us not forget that this will is as valid for the people of Prince Edward Island as it is for those living on Vancouver Island, the Magdalen Islands and even Newfoundland, if bridge technology allowed it.