

Maritime Highways

In the submission made some years ago, the then chairman of the Shubenacadie River crossing committee, G. H. MacDuffie, made this point:

In this same area there is one of the highest infant mortality rates in Nova Scotia chiefly because more easily accessible medical and hospital services are not available.

The proposed crossing would put these people 30 miles or more or a good part of an hour, closer to the medical, dental, clinical, ambulance and hospital services which now make a 60-mile round trip.

Mr. MacDuffie and others made that submission to the Nova Scotia cabinet. I ought to say that the natural capital of East Hants really is not Halifax but, rather, the town of Truro.

The sixth point in favour of the Shubenacadie River crossing is that great savings would be realized in transportation. The Margeson Study of 1964 indicated savings over a 20-year period of 24.25 million travelled miles and 546,000 man or woman hours. Putting it another way, if you allowed 10 cents per mile for driving, which is a low figure in today's circumstances, the savings would be greater than \$3 million. Those figures, of course, are out of date; if brought up to date, the savings would be considerably larger than those I have mentioned.

When the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications visited Nova Scotia some years ago and studied Atlantic transport needs, I arranged for the Shubenacadie River crossing committee to ask Mr. MacDuffie to make an appearance before my colleagues on that committee. The committee met with representatives of the Shubenacadie River committee. Subsequently, when the committee wrote its report for the House of Commons, it said as follows:

It is further recommended that the government should consider the advisability of instituting a five-year program of federal assistance to highways in the Atlantic provinces, \$30 million to be the maximum federal contribution in any one year. This program should be financed on a 90-10 basis.

That is the formula I set out in my notice of motion. I continue:

The provinces would be required to submit plans for a defined network of all-weather highways, chosen for their effect on competition among transportation modes in the Atlantic provinces, and for their contribution toward the economic development of the Atlantic provinces.

That part of the report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communication, drawn up on June 17, 1969, is found at page 39 of issue No. 28 of the proceedings of the committee for that year.

It may also be interesting to put on record part of the document drawn up by Atlantic premiers in March, 1969, dealing with the basic elements of the Atlantic provinces transportation policy. Three new premiers have taken the places of those three who helped to draw up this report. As I understand it, Atlantic transportation is generally dealt with by the Maritimes Transport Commission, in Moncton. Furthermore, the views that were then expressed would undoubtedly be the views of the present governments of the four Atlantic provinces.

After saying there should be a detailed assessment of the network needs of the individual provinces, the premiers proposed, as shown at pages 17 and 18 of *The Basic*

[Mr. McCleave.]

Elements of an Atlantic Provinces Transportation Policy of March, 1969, that:

The length of this program should be ten years with the first five years fixed and the balance renegotiated and reconsidered prior to the conclusion of the first five years. The federal share of total costs, including acquisition of right of way, should be 90 per cent for the first five years. Prior to the end of ten years, a further program should be negotiated, if needed.

• (1710)

That is found at pages 17 and 18 of the report to which I have referred. There is no doubt that the federal government has made substantial payments toward Atlantic transportation. This was first done through the Atlantic Development Board and, laterally, through special agreements with the different provinces. As the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) said in the House of Commons on Tuesday, March 14 this year, and I quote:

At the peak of this program—

That is the road construction program in the Atlantic provinces.

—this support was at the level of about \$57½ million a year.—

Last year new agreements were negotiated with New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland totalling \$60 million. Over the past seven years, therefore, federal support for Atlantic Province Highways has averaged about \$45 million a year, or over the period some \$315 million, with many projects being funded entirely by the federal government.

I do not quarrel with the amounts that have been spent on what I think are very basic, essential services for my part of Atlantic Canada. What I suggest is that it be on a formula basis so that the provinces will know that it will be done on a 90/10 basis and they can then proceed to develop their plans on a somewhat different basis from the one now used.

In pursuing the goal of the Shubenacadie River crossing, I have considered the alternative methods by which it could be achieved. At one time I thought that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion could play a role in helping to provide the crossing, but I gather that the department is now concentrating its efforts on growth centres. Therefore, it seems that this role might be minimal and the important role will be shared between the province of Nova Scotia and the federal Department of Transport. This is the way I have developed my strategy in trying to do the best I can to keep this matter in the limelight and to ensure that eventually the federal and provincial governments have a serious discussion about providing that link across the Shubenacadie River.

Before the Department of Regional Economic Expansion concentrated on growth centres and while the Atlantic Development Board was still alive and well, I had a discussion with some of its economists about the formula that might be applied to justify a Shubenacadie River crossing. The board then used a 7 per cent economic funding of a project such as the river crossing. It estimated that the benefit figure should be between \$280,000 and \$350,000 per year. They looked at the Margeson report, which I mentioned earlier, that dealt with the transportation benefits. They felt that the economic benefit of the Margeson report would have been somewhere around \$117,000 a year. They estimated that the agricultural marketing benefit would be around \$24,000 a year.