

*Government Orders*

I just wanted to summarize my earlier remarks. The fixed link will eliminate an impediment to trade among the three provinces of P.E.I., Nova Scotia and New Brunswick when it is completed. There certainly is now an impediment to transportation and economic development.

The Northumberland Strait is a body of water between P.E.I. and New Brunswick. On one side of that body of water the unemployment rate is 16.2 per cent and on the other side it is 12.1 per cent. The only difference is that P.E.I. has the disadvantage of the poor transportation system between the two.

I started to address some of the environmental concerns that have been brought up over the years. I had mentioned that it had gone through seven environmental studies, the most complete of which addressed the ice-out situation. It recommended that, based on an estimate of a seven-day delay due to ice-outs, the project not go ahead.

• (1520)

A more specific study was done on that problem which addressed it based on a generic type of fixed link that is being proposed now. It arrived at the conclusion that that type of bridge would well meet the criteria of a two-day delay ice-out period. In fact, the period under the present plan is considered to be substantially less than the two days required by the environmental process.

The way they plan to build the bridge is interesting. They plan to build as much of it on land as possible and then take the assemblies out and place them in the water. There will be some dredging taking place during construction but there will be little. There will be less than there is now in the Northumberland Strait over a two-year period, and the bridge will be constructed over five years. Therefore, in terms of upsetting the fishery or the environment, there will be far less dredging than is being done now.

Again the design is very unique. It is very interesting that they have decided to build almost all of it on Prince Edward Island.

The impact on fishing will be addressed. During construction there will be a small impact on the fishery. There have been offsets put in place for the fishermen. A subject that nobody talks about is the advantage to the fishery when it is completed. There is a good chance the

fishery will be enhanced. Anywhere there has been a man-made structure like the fixed link with a large amount of construction being done under water as in Canso or Bar Harbour, Maine the fishery ends up being concentrated on these structures. It creates a natural habitat for lobsters and other fish after completion of the project, which runs contrary to the argument that it may upset the fishery.

Another point that is not understood is that the ferries that go between New Brunswick and P.E.I. are allotted a wide swath from P.E.I. to New Brunswick in which there is no fishing allowed at present. It is a large area and it will be eliminated. When the bridge is completed that area will be given back to the fishery again.

There probably will be a small negative impact on the fishery during construction. However a lot of people, including myself, think there will be a much larger positive impact after the project is completed. Some people suggest there will be a battle among the fishermen over the 44 abutments of the bridge. They will each want to have one or two. I expect that will be an interesting procedure.

I have attended many presentations by the president of Strait Crossing Incorporated. Mr. Giannelia has gone out of his way time and time again to meet with people in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. He will meet with anyone, he will answer any questions or concerns and he accepts advice and direction at all of his meetings. I am impressed by the way he handles questions. There is no time limit. He will take as much time as is required and is not afraid to touch any subject. He has thought this out, is very determined to go ahead with it and is determined to meet the time guidelines as outlined. Every aspect of the project has been addressed from an environmental perspective and every part has had its environmental impact addressed. It will be considered at the time of construction.

I live in one of the communities that is closest to it on the mainland side, Amherst, Nova Scotia. It is a very big and important project for us. Many people are skeptical that it will ever get started because we have had so many starts in the past. However, it now appears that it will go ahead. To say the least, we are excited. Our business communities have come together to make sure that we have the best possible facilities to address the needs of the people and the companies involved in building the project.