

Canadian Museum of Oceanography

I myself, as a Member from the National Capital Region, although I would like the National Capital to expand somewhat into my riding, as I have said in the past, and I am taking this opportunity to say it again, I would like a museum of this kind in our region. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of museum and the kind of facility that attracts the whole family, and there are many Canadians, many people that would like to see this kind of facility. The Hon. Member for Halifax says: Well, Ottawa has to be the worst place for this kind of centre. He wasn't listening very carefully to the eloquent speech by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier, because he would have realized that we are here in part of what used to be the Champlain Sea. In the National Capital region, we are close to Pink's Lake, a very historic body of water that goes back to prehistoric times, if I am not mistaken, and has certain kinds of fish that used to live in the ocean and have now become freshwater fish. A facility of this kind would include saltwater and freshwater fish and the rest. It would be an aquarium, which I think would be a very useful, very attractive and very desirable facility as far as tourism is concerned.

After all, Canada has the largest expanse of ocean surrounding it of any country in the world. We have oceans on three sides, and here in Ottawa, in the national capital of our country, when citizens come to visit, they will be able to see something really Canadian, the ocean. There is nothing more Canadian than that. I want to congratulate the Hon. Member on his excellent initiative.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to participate in this debate. I wish to compliment the Hon. Member for Ottawa Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for bringing forward this very important topic. The idea of a Canadian Museum of Oceanography is an excellent one. I confess that I cannot totally agree with his suggestion as to where the museum should be located, the National Capital Region. I am a little closer to buying the suggestion of my friend, the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby). However, if we look at the museum complexes that already exist, we will find that in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, we have the basis of

what could be a Canadian national museum of oceanography and marine life in the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic.

One of the reasons this suggestion is a meritorious one, that we should consider designating a national museum of oceanography, is the important role that the ocean and marine life has played throughout Canadian history. Who knows exactly when the first Europeans crossed the Atlantic, but when they came, whether it was in the 14th or the 15th century, they came looking for our fish. We are still looking for our fish. In fact these days, we are having difficulty finding as many fish as we might like to have. However, it is still an important part of the life of Canada, not just Canada and the Atlantic, but indeed the sea life impacts from one end of Canada to the other. We are after all surrounded by three oceans: the Arctic, the Pacific, and the Atlantic. There is no question that marine life has played a very important role. One could tell, through such a museum, a very stirring story of courage and enterprise, of centuries of history and development.

We could look at the evolution of the fisheries as a source of economic wealth and development and the technological changes that have occurred throughout the years. Indeed, it would be very appropriate today to see such a museum focus on environmental issues and concerns and ecological needs.

My home is about 15 feet from the Atlantic Ocean, literally. The cove around which I live in the community of Hubbards, I have seen over the last 40-odd year changes in the ecology of that cove. Saturday last I was in fact swimming in it and observing the bottom and snorkelling. It is extraordinary to see the changes that take place. If we had a museum that properly demonstrated how the environment of the ocean and the ecology can be impacted, it would be a tremendously valuable education for our young people.

I think the idea of a national museum is simply an excellent one. We are particularly aware in Atlantic Canada today of how important our ocean is to us and how we can be in difficulty when the resources of that ocean are not readily available to us.

My hon. friend from Halifax West talked about some of the facilities that already exist in Nova Scotia that provide the basis for an excellent museum of oceanography as well as marine life generally. He spoke about the