

Adjournment Debate

secretary can finally indicate some action after 16 long months.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) raised this important question of the movement of potatoes which gives me an opportunity to point out briefly what the government is doing in this area.

For the past year, the federal government has worked with various potato dealers to improve the movement of that commodity from eastern to central Canada and also to export markets. Of course we had excellent co-operation, assistance and support from the P.E.I. Potato Marketing Board, the New Brunswick Potato Shippers' Association, the Canadian National, the Canadian Pacific, the Atlantic Provinces Truckers Association, the staff in the ports of St. John, Halifax and Prince Edward Island and also, of course, Mr. Speaker, the assistance and co-operation of the governments of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

In working in close co-operation with them, Mr. Speaker, and in establishing the facts and the real needs we were able to reach a general agreement on the measures to be taken and to implement those measures for the following purposes. First of all, one of the prime goals was to reduce the rate of increase in freight rates applicable to potatoes. Second, one of the other goals was to provide more efficient trucking for potatoes. Third, we wanted to improve the port facilities, more particularly in the port of St. John and, finally, to provide a larger number as well as a better use and better quality of freight cars.

Last year, we also showed that there would be no shortage of cars in the current crop year, contrary to the alarm of an imminent crisis and shortage of cars expressed by opposition members, as indeed the hon. member for Egmont repeated tonight.

As a result of the above mentioned measures, the movement of potatoes from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick to central Canada and export markets caused very little problems during the current crop year. Based on the facts that will be submitted to it by railways and shippers, the cabinet will make a decision in the coming weeks about the additional cars that will be required for the crop year 1978-79. The government is quite aware of the fact that additional cars will be required next year and that they will not be available unless specific steps are taken.

● (2217)

[*English*]

Once a decision is made on the cars for 1978-79, the working group on potatoes will continue to consider and implement other measures to improve the movement of potatoes. For example, they will be looking at further port

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

improvements in Saint John and the need for additional cars two or three years from now, the possibility of increased use of containers and trucks, physical improvements at loading and unloading points, etc. By working closely with industry, the provinces and the carriers over an extended period, the government will deal with the many problems efficiently and effectively. The distribution system for potatoes has been improved by steps already undertaken; the acquisition of additional cars, and other measures to be implemented during 1978, will improve the system even further.

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT—FRONTENAC COUNTY, ONT.—
CONSTRUCTION OF TEMPORARY BRIDGE TO FACILITATE
TRAVEL

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, due to my decision to retire from the House of Commons at the termination of this thirtieth parliament, this will probably be one of the last occasions on which I will use the adjournment session to voice questions and grievances raised by my constituents in Frontenac-Lennox and Addington before this House. This being so, I wish to thank you for the many past favours and your indulgence to me and my constituency.

My remarks tonight stem from my question of March 14, 1978, as reported at page 3751 of *Hansard*, where I asked the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Faulkner) the following question:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I have in my possession a petition from 120 residents, including tourist operators, in the townships of Pittsburgh and Storrington, in Frontenac county, fronting on the Rideau River system, protesting the fact that with the construction of the new Brass Point bridge across the Rideau River, a detour of up to 30 miles will be necessary in the daily travel of the inhabitants and tourists, especially to and from Storrington, in order to gain access to Highway No. 15 and the Kingston area. My question is: why did this department not provide a temporary Bailey bridge to serve the public during the ten-month life of this \$1.6 million contract, and avoid the extra energy, expense outlay and inconvenience to the people, to our tourist operators and to our American customers?

The minister on that day answered me as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I will have to look into that matter and report to the hon. member.

And that was done. I recall that in sessions of our council at the municipal level petitions from constituents commanded the highest priority, and that also applies to this House of Commons. I have here in my hand the petition I referred to which is signed by about 120 constituents from Storrington and Pittsburgh townships, in which they complain of up to 30 miles of detour now required to gain access to highway 15 in the Kingston area during the seven months of construction of the new Brass Point bridge. Many of these petitioners are tourists and/or employees in the tourist industry. The petitioners feel that if there is no temporary crossing provided at the point of construction of the new bridge many of these tourist operators will lose their businesses or have to go out of business this summer and accept unemployment insurance as a result of the drop in business due to no thoroughfare. American tourists who patronize the other side of the Rideau River and the lake