

to address this problem and ensure that the natural heritage of Canada is protected.

● (1720)

This Bill is particularly timely now because heritage conservation is much in the minds of Canadians this year. One hundred years ago this November, the Government of Sir John A. Macdonald established Canada's first national park at Banff. That was regarded by all of us as the beginning of the heritage conservation movement in this country.

The National Parks centennial year is an occasion for all of us to celebrate what has been accomplished in the last 100 years and also to chart a course for the future of Canadian heritage conservation. Today there are 31 national parks across the country; at least one in each province and each territory. There are also more than 70 major national historic parks in Canada and nine heritage canals. All of these heritage places are managed by Parks Canada for the benefit and enjoyment of all Canadians.

This year there are centennial celebrations at every national park, site and canal across the country. I am sure the Hon. Member and indeed every Member of the House joins me in wishing great success to these special festivities.

It was a Conservative Government which, 100 years ago, took the first steps to protect our natural environment, and it was a Conservative Government which took the first steps to protect our historic resources. Canada's first national historic park was initiated in 1917 at Fort Anne, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. Two years later, 1919, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was created by the Government of the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden.

This Bill would propose new responsibilities for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board. I invite Hon. Members to look for a moment at the Board's historic and at its important accomplishments. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was created to identify persons, places and events of national historic significance and to advise the federal Government on appropriate ways to commemorate them.

The first point I would like to make is that the Board's task is enormous. It has a responsibility for the entire country with many specific items to consider. At the time it began its work, there were literally dozens of sites of great historic interest in every province, sites which were unprotected and subject to destruction at any time. Interested Board members were given a \$10 per diem allowance to attend Board meetings and in order to discourage unnecessary expense they were instructed to do the bulk of their work by correspondence. I do not know how well that would work today, Mr. Speaker, but at that time perhaps correspondence services were satisfactory.

By 1921, 46 sites had been recommended to the Minister for commemoration as soon as possible. The first bronze commemorative plaque was set in place in 1922 at Port Dover, Ontario, to mark the location at which France laid claim to the Lake Erie region in 1670. For those who do not know where Port Dover is, it is very close to Simcoe. Soon after this more plaques were erected in different provinces.

Heritage Railway Stations

Today the Historic Sites and Monuments Board consists of 17 members who advise the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Blais-Grenier) on matters of national historic and architectural significance. Each province and territory is represented by one member except Ontario and Quebec, each of which has two members. Other members of the Board are the Dominion Archivist, a representative of the National Museums and a representative of Parks Canada.

The Board meets twice yearly to review submissions and make recommendations to the Minister of the Environment. Only the Minister can declare a person, place or event to be of national historic significance. The Historic Sites and Monuments board welcomes suggestions from historical societies, heritage groups and other organizations and individuals. Suggestions should be of truly national importance as opposed to regional or local importance.

To determine what constitutes truly national importance, the Board has established general criteria. The first such criterion is persons who have had a significant impact on Canadian history, irrespective of the country in which all or part of their achievement occurred; second, events or movements which have shaped Canadian history or illustrate effectively the broad cultural, social, political, economic or military themes of Canadian history; and third, places which shed light on or illustrate effectively the culture of a prehistoric people or are associated with important archaeological discoveries. That is very reminiscent of the comments made by the Hon. Member who spoke previously about the great archaeological items in his own constituency. The fourth such criterion is structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or engineering type, are exceptionally valuable for the style or method of construction of their periods or are examples of the work of a master builder, designer, engineer or architect.

The Board very specifically does not consider for commemoration cemeteries and graves except those of the Fathers of Confederation and those having archaeological significance; structures that have been moved from their original location; places outside Canada; and people who are still alive or who have died within the past five years. If the Board determines that a person, place or event is of national historic significance, it so recommends to the Minister, advising an appropriate means of formal recognition.

In most cases a bilingual Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada bronze plaque of standard design is erected. The site where the plaque is located need not be owned by the federal Government. Today there are more than 900 plaques across the country, many of them located on privately owned property.

In special cases, the Board may recommend that a distinctive monument be built. The Marie Madeleine de Verchères monument at Verchères, Quebec, and the Stefanson memorial at Arnes, Manitoba, are examples of this. The Board may recommend that the Minister enter into a cost-sharing agreement with a non-profit organization. The independent organization owns and manages the historic location and ensures that