

Government Orders

The Canadian people voted for a government which recognized the need to create jobs in this country. That is what the message was in October 1993. This project will create a number of badly needed jobs. As was stated earlier by the minister there will be 3,500 jobs over three and a half years in the construction of the project. There will be another 2,000 spin-off jobs once the project is built with fully 96 per cent of these new jobs to be filled by Atlantic Canadians.

I could be parochial and strictly take care of the needs of southwestern Ontario or address them in my comments today. I do not think that is my role as a member of Parliament. We have heard too much of that petty approach to politics today in this House, not on this side I might add but from members opposite, unfortunately.

We have to look at this as an important project to a part of our country which badly needs an economic boost. I am going to support it and I am pleased to see it will do so much for employment.

The project will also show an increase in tourism of some 25 per cent. One can readily understand the spin-offs in jobs that will create in the service sector as Canadians find it easier to get to Prince Edward Island. I have had the opportunity to visit that beautiful island as I hope have many other members and I intend to go back. It will be a pleasure to cross on the bridge.

Concern has been expressed about the ferry workers and the loss of their jobs. This is a worry for all of us. I am pleased that the minister in tabling his statement has shown very clearly there will be fair treatment for the ferry workers. They will have the first choice for employment on the bridge project. There is a fair severance package to be put in place for the displaced workers. As we speak consultations are under way with the unions to make sure this takes place.

We have heard some concerns raised about the environment. One of the few relevant comments from the other side addressed the issue of the environment. However it totally ignored the fact that a comprehensive environmental review has taken place to make sure this project is environmentally sound. In fact a federal judge ruled that the government has taken great care in meeting the criteria of the federal environmental review.

• (1320)

Frankly, there is no evidence whatsoever that there is any serious environmental concern with this project. In fact the over 90 studies on the environmental aspect alone reached the opposite conclusion, that the project is environmentally sound and that it will have no significant impact on the environment.

Of course that would include fishermen in the area. It has been acknowledged that fishermen in the area may lose an opportunity during construction to fish certain waters. Obviously they will. In recognition of this a \$10 million compensation fund is to

be established by the developer to compensate these very fishermen.

Again the environmental review has clearly shown that the project is environmentally sound and there is to be compensation for the fishermen in the area whose livelihood will be affected.

We heard about the engineering and safety concerns of this project. The bridge has been designed to the highest standards. It has a life span of 100 years before needing a major retrofit. It has been independently assessed by engineers and found to be very sound.

As the member of Parliament for London—Middlesex, I want to take a national view on this. I invite members from all sides of the House, particularly those members opposite, to rise above petty politics. Find some vision and courage and endorse this project which is nationally important for this country. Let us move forward to the 21st century with the vision that this is our nation, all of it, from coast to coast to coast and that is the way we have to look after it. Let us not try to set up one region against another.

It would be nice to hear the members opposite speak to the motion with a little more national vision than what we have heard so far.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some comments to my hon. colleague opposite—he often refers to us as being opposite—and two questions.

First of all, I found his preliminary remarks mean. He said: “I for one will say something interesting”. It is too bad for the minister who, I feel, said interesting things, too bad for the Leader of the Official Opposition and too bad for the other speakers. It was indeed interesting. Congratulations.

I would also like to express disagreement with what he said about the relevancy of our remarks, and I would like to remind him of the Constitution Act, 1791, which established the foundation for the system of parliamentary representation. The people who elected Reform Party members, or you or us in the Bloc Québécois, know very well that the relevancy of the remarks we have to make in this House depends only on our opinion. On that point also I disagree with my hon. colleague.

I would like to put a question to him. One of his colleagues spoke of a plebiscite in the case of Prince Edward Island, whereas the minister spoke of a referendum. With regard to the referendum, this is the term you used, and we used the term you brought into the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. I call the hon. member for Terrebonne to order. I would simply remind all members that they should refrain from directly addressing other