

vincial authorities come together as soon as possible with a view to fixing the amount of the fair compensation mentioned in 1942 and which the province of Quebec must pay Ottawa in exchange for the repeal of tolls on Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges.

In coming to an agreement, your department as well as provincial and federal authorities would only redress a situation where justice should have been done the taxpayer of Quebec in 1942. According to statistics, the 25 counties surrounding Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges have a production estimated at approximately \$400,000,000; in those 25 counties yearly salaries paid exceed \$120,000,000. It is therefore unfair to burden the population living on those industries and salaries with tolls, when such tolls have been repealed, and rightly so in other parts of the province of Quebec.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that there is no conflict but rather a community of interests between provincial jurisdiction and federal jurisdiction. Ottawa paid for the bridges and it is only fair that they be reimbursed. The provincial government has decided to do away with tolls, and it would be only fair to repeal them on all bridges in Quebec, including Victoria and Jacques Cartier bridges. In order to do so, the Quebec government should pay the dominion government a reasonable compensation that should have been set and paid in 1942. I sincerely hope that the amount of the said compensation will be determined by way of agreement between the Quebec and Ottawa authorities, in order that justice be done to all taxpayers of the province of Quebec.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

(Text):

Hon. LIONEL CHEVRIER (Minister of Transport): I think I should make a reply to the statements made by the hon. member for Chambly-Rouville and the hon. member for St. Johns-Iberville-Napierville. I have no intention of replying at the same length as the hon. gentlemen spoke on this important question. I might summarize in part what I have to say by making this statement, that I met the representatives of the municipalities on the south shore together with the two hon. members and certain others and discussed this question at some length, and advised them of the stand I was prepared to take. I think I should place on record, without going into the matter in too great detail, some facts concerning these two bridges.

[Mr. A. Coté.]

Both hon. gentlemen request the abolition of tolls, and with that there is no disagreement because I think we would all like to see tolls abolished, particularly motorists who have to cross bridges and are not anxious to pay tolls at any time. But one must not forget that, under the constitution of our country, the municipalities and the provinces have certain responsibilities and the dominion government has certain other responsibilities.

The Jacques Cartier bridge was, I think, at the outset purely a municipal and a provincial responsibility; but in view of circumstances that existed at the time, the federal government was prevailed upon through its agency, the national harbours board, to build that bridge, which it did. It entered into a tripartite agreement with the city of Montreal, the province of Quebec and the national harbours board, or rather its predecessor the Montreal harbour commission, to build this bridge, it being understood that one-third of the cost of operation would be paid by the municipality of the city of Montreal, one-third by the province, and the other third by the federal authority. Since 1944 the city of Montreal has fallen down in that responsibility. The national harbours board has had to institute proceedings against the city, which has not paid its share of the cost of operation for 1944, 1945, 1946 and thus far in 1947. The province has taken a similar attitude and has not paid its contributions since 1944. So that I am sure that the hon. gentlemen who have sponsored this cause will take into consideration the fact that if the municipality of the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec by statute and, prior to that, by resolution agreed to pay their share of the undertaking and now refuse to pay it, the federal government cannot look upon the abolition of tolls with much enthusiasm.

Mr. PINARD: I do not want to discuss the point because it is *sub judice*. There may be reasons why the city and the government refused to pay their share. I do not think we should continue discussing it.

Mr. CHEVRIER: That does not derogate from the force of the argument that, by contract, these bodies have consented to pay a portion of the cost of maintenance and operation. Whether they have a just cause or not, they have for some time refused to pay, even though they had undertaken and begun to make payments. The federal government is now being asked to abolish tolls. I am sure that the hon. gentlemen—and both of them in their remarks have said so—would not want the federal government, or at least the agencies of the federal government, to abolish these