

Government Orders

drive across Prince Edward Island to take the ferry at Souris. Does the hon. member know about studies on increased traffic that could alleviate our concerns about delays on the way to the Magdalen Islands? Can he comment on that?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. McGuire: Mr. Speaker, in reference to the hon. member's question about a plebiscite, the federal government was in no way, shape or form involved in it. The plebiscite was strictly within the province of P.E.I. It was held to give the government, under Premier Ghiz at that time, an indication of what the islanders felt about a fixed link to the mainland. It had nothing to do with the federal government. The federal government was not even remotely involved with the project at that time. It was merely a sampling of public opinion as to what islanders actually felt about the fixed link.

As far as getting to Magdalen Island, which is part of the beautiful province of Quebec, I would think a fixed link would make it a lot easier. The member would not have to wait at Cape Tormentine for any length of time. He could simply drive up, drive over the bridge, continue on his way to Surrey and catch the ferry to Magdalen Island. He would be able to spend more time there once the fixed link was built.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I have a question of clarification for the member for Egmont who just spoke.

I visited his constituency on several occasions. I find it to be a very beautiful part of our country. I am slightly envious of him in representing that constituency. I know he would be of my constituency as well. I invite him to visit any time he wishes to do so.

I have two points of clarification. The first has to do with the plebiscite. Could the member confirm my recollection that when the plebiscite was held the question implied that perhaps the fixed link could be a safe underground tunnel as much as it could be the construction of a bridge?

Second, I heard him say in his speech that the constitutional amendment we are discussing today has been dealt with in the Prince Edward Island legislature. I was not aware of that. Could the member clarify if the amendment has been dealt with in the Prince Edward Island legislature, including the parts about tolls and possible privatization of the structure?

Mr. McGuire: Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. member to revisit Prince Edward Island any time, and all members of the House. It is the best place one could possibly visit in the summertime. I would not want to visit the hon. member's riding

in the wintertime either so I do not expect him to come to Prince Edward Island.

The question on the plebiscite did not include any options. The tunnel was never on the ballot as an option. It was strictly: "Are you in favour of a fixed link?" The people who were bidding for the fixed link considered in the development of a proposal the option of a tunnel. I think they found only one bidder who actually went into the matter of the tunnel to any great depth. Even that company felt it was much too expensive to continue any further exploration of that option and that the most economic option was the bridge option.

It was not considered at all on the plebiscite. The people who did look into it on the construction side and the bidder side felt there were many environmental problems with the tunnel. It was not an economically viable option.

On the member's second question, the provincial legislature last spring passed a unanimous resolution endorsing the constitutional amendment to the terms of union between P.E.I. and the Dominion of Canada. That has already gone through its legislature. It is a resolution only. It was directed, as we are directed today by Madam Justice Reed, that this had to happen before the bridge could be legally used in place of a ferry system.

• (1230)

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is a very great privilege to join in this debate today. It is a particular privilege to follow the hon. member for Egmont who for such a long time has been an advocate in this House for all of the interests of his home province of Prince Edward Island. He has been such an advocate for the establishment of the fixed link.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. It is a delight to have you in the chair. I am sure you will prosper there with all of us to be your sheep, shall I say.

With regard to this debate, in the more than five years I have been privileged to be a member of this House representing a riding in Atlantic Canada, I have stood countless times and spoken on matters of great and indeed of crucial interest to the people of our region. Frequently we have looked at the possibilities of development for employment, development to create a better climate for business, development in the area of natural resources and so on and so forth. We have met walls because of our small population. We have met difficulties because of the problem of distances, as in every region of this country, et cetera.

It is with particular gratification that I stand today to speak in support of the constitutional amendment to enable the building of the fixed link crossing between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.