

Private Members' Business

co-operative secretariat is studying the implications for the federal government of implementing the recommendations.

In conclusion, let me say that the hon. member has raised an important issue. I want to congratulate him on doing so. The record shows, though, that this government has done a lot to assist the development of the co-operative sector and the worker co-ops in particular.

I see you signalling that my time is up. I just want once again to congratulate the hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River for bringing forth his motion to the House for discussion and deliberation. If he listened carefully to what I had to say today, I think he would understand that this government is leading the way and taking its responsibilities for workers' co-operatives very seriously, indeed as the history of this government and the initiatives that we have taken since taking office in 1984 have shown.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to deal tonight with the motion moved by the Hon. Member for Prince Albert—Churchill River (Mr. Funk) which reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of encouraging and building community-based investment and job initiatives through community and worker co-operatives, community development corporations, regional councils, small businesses and farms and municipal governments.

In short, Mr. Speaker, our hon. friend would like the Government to do more and provide co-operatives and other organizations with more money. Therefore, I suggest it might be interesting to look at co-operatives, because this is one of the key sectors in our economy today. For instance, financial co-operatives credit unions co-operatives and the so-called *caisses populaires* have approximately 9 million members in Canada with assets of over \$56 billion. Insurance co-operatives, with assets of about \$5.4 billion cover 9.5 subscribers and the co-operative trust companies administer nearly \$17 billion in assets. This indicates just how strong the co-operative movement is in Canada. In the financial sector there are no less than 3,859 co-operatives with a total membership of nearly 3.1 million and combined assets of

nearly \$7 billion. This accounts for \$14 billion in economic activity in this country.

Mr. Speaker, newly-formed groups of workers and financial services as well as the ever growing number of sectors where the co-operative principles are being applied constitute a growth factor in the Canadian economy. Ever since the members of the British Rockdale movement first stated the principles of co-operation nearly a century ago, the suggestion that ordinary people should work together to meet their own needs has gained currency the world over, so much so that nowadays we have co-operatives actively engaged in practically all sectors of our society. People turn to the co-operative movement to obtain day care services, health services, food or accommodation. The movement has even gained a toehold in the labour market. Let us take forestry co-operatives as an example. There is one in the riding of Jonquière which I proudly represent in this House. I am referring to Laterrière's forestry co-operative, a group of people who got together to develop their economy and improve their working methods to draw maximum benefits from our huge forest resources.

The notions of participatory democracy, education and sharing benefits gained as a result of joint efforts are already firmly established in that field. As a matter of fact, my colleague the Minister of State for Housing had an opportunity to meet with people involved in the *Mouvement des coopératives d'habitation permanentes*, and I think our colleague was highly impressed by their dedication, energy and efficient approach in promoting their convictions.

I have in mind some people who work in that field, and of course I need not go any further than my own region, my own riding. A good example would be Mr. Allan Gaudreault who works for Brich and who helped a group of people launch their own co-operative project. This is the case of one man who deserves to be singled out for the quality of the work he does for our fellow citizens.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the responsibility of our colleague, has done a lot to promote this kind of accommodation for Canadians. Over the years the federal government has always made it a point to consult regularly with the co-operative housing