

Supply

I am coming now to Bill C-91 which deals with the Federal Business Development Bank that will soon become the Business Development Bank of Canada. There again there was no consultation and no joint action. This showed a certain disregard for the industry committee of which I am vice-chair and which never made such recommendations, on the contrary. If there were a recommendation from the parliamentary secretary, it was basically to reduce the importance of the bank, to make it the bank of Canadian small businesses. It was to scale it down. But now, we are going to the other extreme, Madam Speaker, with the Business Development Bank of Canada, to which the minister gives a new mandate; it will no longer be a last resort for small business but rather intervene in programs supporting Canadian entrepreneurship.

● (1155)

Those words, which are neither defined nor specified in the legislation, will allow the federal bank, pursuant to clause 21, to intervene not only in federal organizations, but also in provincial ones and in regional organizations created by the Quebec government. That is still basically a way of interfering in the daily lives of the people in this country, and of the people of Quebec, without any mandate to do so.

For those who do not believe what we are saying, I refer to the March 30 article in which two well-known Liberals talk about the future of Canada.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. member for Trois-Rivières and I would like to ask him a question. Are liberals not trying to find solutions to the problems of Ontario regarding the financing of small business and to generalize the Ontario model by amending the Federal Business Development Bank Act?

I remember that, in the months following the election, Ontario Liberal members on the industry committee were somewhat angry and said that banks were not sensitive enough to the needs of small business, that the last recession had caused many bankruptcies and that ways had to be found to deal with the situation.

Quebec committee members were less concerned by the situation because Quebec had already developed its own tools like the Fonds de solidarité des travailleurs de la FTQ—the CSN will soon have a similar fund—and the Mouvement des Caisses Desjardins. There is also the use made of business support centre funds and regional development funds. We already had all those resources.

I feel that the amendments to the Federal Business Development Bank were proposed to please Ontario but they will not make funds more easily available to Quebec. We already have regional funds available. There are many coordination problems

between the various funds. Is the change of vocation of the Federal Business Development Bank not going to make things more complicated and increase delays without necessarily having a positive effect on the access of Quebec small business to financing?

Mr. Rocheleau: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, for his question. I commend his intuition. Indeed, when the Standing Committee on Industry started looking into the matter, the problem was centered on the issue of funding of small and medium size enterprises. Members of Parliament from Ontario made legitimate representations, considering the slump caused by the lack of credit, although this was never proven.

But things went differently afterwards, when the purpose of the Federal Business Development Bank was radically changed. Previously, the bank's primary purpose and almost only concern was assisting small and medium size enterprises, but that is now becoming somewhat secondary.

I will read the first lines of clause 4 which deals with that purpose:

“The purpose of the Bank is to support Canadian entrepreneurship—”

That is what subclause 4(1) says. Subclause 4(2) says:

“In carrying out its activities, the Bank must give particular consideration to the needs of small and medium sized-enterprises.”

So, we see that what was previously a fundamental concern for small and medium size enterprises is becoming somewhat secondary. The bank will deal as it can with small and medium size enterprises having primarily established entrepreneurship development programs, as I was saying earlier, which do not qualify or have not been defined. Anything is possible with the private funds that the bank will have in the future.

I would like to give more information on the two distinguished Liberals that I was telling you about. They are the hon. senator Rivest and Mr. Forget. They said on an open line show on the CBC, which is as credible as these two gentlemen: “Mr. Rivest having revealed that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Privy Council is preparing a major administrative and tax reform for Canada”. This is Mr. Rivest speaking, a very good Liberal.

● (1200)

“Mr. Forget went on to say that he feared a no vote on the referendum—this is very important for Quebecers—would lead to a loss of control by the government of Quebec on subsequent events”. That is, after the referendum. “This situation would create opportunities for initiatives, whether under the constitution or not, but which could, at any rate, considerably change the rules. It seems to me that, for now, the threat to Quebec lies