

Supply

stakeholders must be genuinely and completely involved, that is the employer, labour unions and regional players because this process can sometimes have a tremendous impact on a region. The Quebec government must also be involved because of its thorough knowledge of this question within the Quebec context.

Of course, this does not preclude—and this is the way the issue is set out—seeking out all those who have some expertise in this field to help speed matters along and ensure that case by case, the situation improves and production is geared to new markets. I think this is one point on which we all agree.

[English]

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, we are beginning to agree. The approach that the member for Trois-Rivières just suggested is essentially what I was trying to communicate in my remarks.

As the minister said, we need to develop a strategic approach and that is what we are attempting to do. We cannot just look at these difficulties in isolation from the work that the minister of human resources is doing. It cannot be looked at in isolation from what the industry committee is doing or what the Minister of the Environment is doing.

In my view we have not spent enough time today talking about the potential in environmental technologies. We must become a nation that measures its strength not by its armaments but by our environmental technologies. That is an area where I think most people would agree there is terrific potential.

There is another thing, a final point I want to make. This is actually a plug. On May 17 a group of members of Parliament from both sides of the house, 10 of us, are going to Beijing with people from over 100 small and medium sized businesses, not the big businesses that tend to go on these missions. We will be looking for new markets, new opportunities.

We all know that the Asia-Pacific region is just exploding with opportunity especially for small and medium sized business. There might be all kinds of opportunity for people who are currently in the conversion process and looking to that region of the world for new markets and new potential.

As the Minister of Industry said earlier this morning, it has to be a comprehensive approach. We have to get the financial institutions on side. The Export Development Corporation has to be working. The human resource component is helping people get retrained for the new economy. We have to beef up our ability to go out and sell abroad. We are not very good hustlers in this country. We tend to be staid. We are not as aggressive as some of our American friends to the south or the Germans or the French. One of the things that we as parliamentarians have to do is encourage our small and medium size business community to hustle a little more beyond the boundaries of Canada.

• (1235)

I realize I only have a minute, but that is something that we as members of Parliament can do to support the small and medium size business sector. We go with them.

The only problem that I have is that members of the Reform Party do not want to come with us when we take these small and medium size business people on these trips to try and forge new markets because they do not think these trips are that productive. However, I hope eventually they will see that they are very important to the small business community and they are not junkets.

[Translation]

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the motion before us. First of all, I would like to say that last week, on an opposition day, we had a motion with which I showed the Liberal government's inaction on agriculture. I spoke last week to show, with supporting figures, that this government was really not doing enough about agriculture in Canada, especially in Quebec.

This week, we are speaking up to denounce again this government's inertia on the whole issue of the conversion of military industries to the manufacture of useful civilian items. I care about this issue and that is why I chose to participate in the proceedings of the defence committee, to look at the whole issue of defence more closely. What interested me on the defence committee was the whole issue of the conversion of military factories to civilian uses.

To my great dismay, this famous committee has met at least fifteen times, if not more. First, I must say that there was a standing committee, which I joined, and then the government called for the addition of a joint committee, made up of MPs and senators, besides the standing committee on defence.

At every meeting I attended of either committee, I always added the whole question of industrial conversion to the agenda because it was never there. Every time I asked the question on one committee or the other, they wondered whether the defence committee was the one to deal with conversion and today they again raise the question as to whether the defence committee will discuss conversion or will pass it on to the industry committee.

It is total confusion now. In the end, we do not know which committee will have to deal with defence. The government has already been in office for six months. Many military factories, especially in Quebec, have to work with their employees every day to try to keep those jobs, and we are still discussing which committee, the standing committee on defence or the joint committee on defence or the committee on industry, is to deal with industrial conversion.