In May 1975, the then president of the Treasury Board, the hon. Jean Chrétien, was asked to develop a program and to designate the groups of civil servants in the national capital area and of the large urban centres in Canada who could be transferred. The main objectives of the Government of Canada were first, to bring the administration of federal programs closer to those directly concerned; secondly, to help slow growth and high unemployment areas; thirdly, to make the federal administration more conspicuous in the communities where it was not much felt and, where activities related to the country as a whole can contribute to maintain national unity; and finally, to reduce the undue concentration of civil servants in the national capital area.

In Canada, the federal public service is mostly concentrated in the national capital area, where are found more than 30 per cent of the federal civil servants, that is more than 75,000 people. Such concentration is much higher than in other confederations, in the United States, for example, where only about 12 per cent of the federal employees work in the area of Washington D.C. The total capital expenditures required by the government for the decentralization program will amount to some $200 million. This will not require additional expenditures, since most of these are charged against the normal construction budget of the Department of Public Works.

The capital expenditures related to the decentralization will obviously benefit the communities, where these services will be established way before the actual move. In many cases new buildings will have to be built, and it is estimated this will directly create some 4,000 man-years of employment in related sectors. The re-establishment and the decentralization will also contribute to promote the government policy as regards regional economic expansion and balanced urban growth. The federal government's decentralization efforts in the last few years have already produced concrete results. For example, Northern Transportation Company Limited headquarters, were moved to Edmonton, Petro-Canada headquarters, to Calgary, the Royal Mint to Winnipeg, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion's activities and services, were divided between four areas and established within the provinces, only the headquarters remaining in the national capital.

We all know that 24 Canadian cities have been selected by the federal government to receive these transfers. Six cities have been chosen in Quebec, and Sherbrooke is one of them. The projects in Matane and Shawinigan are already operating. I am told that a week or so ago tenders were called for excavation works at Jonquière. The cargography service of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has been selected to move in Sherbrooke, and on October 3, 1977, the federal government announced its intention to proceed, by 1983, the target date for official opening, with the moving of over 750 public servants and their families to Sherbrooke in the eastern townships.

The surveying and mapping branch is the Canadian government organization responsible for basic mapping in Canada. Its major programs include grids for geodesic control surveys, the topographical maps in the National Atlas and the aeronautical maps. The maintenance of the international border and the surveying of Canadian lands are other major activities of that branch. The surveying and mapping branch head office now located in Ottawa includes some 945 jobs, of which 75 per cent are filled by people in the scientific, professional and technical group. According to current plans, some 750 jobs will be transferred, the remaining work being gradually farmed out. Total annual salaries for the relocalized part of the branch will be in the order of $15 million. The relocation should cost some $40 million. It seems the government decided to relocate the branch to Sherbrooke for a number of reasons: the presence of two universities—one French and one English—two CEGEPS—one French and one English—a number of high calibre education institutions, both French and English, and finally the Eastern Townships environment, a bilingual environment that perfectly suited the relocation as admitted by everyone.

Sherbrooke, with a population of about 90,000, is some 90 miles east of Montreal and 135 miles southwest of Quebec city. It is large enough to absorb an organization of that size and is considered the most important growth centre in the eastern townships. Because of the major economic impact of the project, its numerous employment opportunities both current and potential in an area that has a great need of it, and the leading effect of an organization of that size, the decentralization to Sherbrooke of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has become for us a very urgent and most important issue. Large investments in our areas depend on the decisions that will be taken by the Canadian and Quebec governments. I am also convinced a large number of foreign, Canadian, Quebec and Sherbrooke investments would be made at very short notice if both levels of governments were to come to an agreement.

Therefore, the decision to implement that plan will have for Sherbrooke and the eastern townships as a whole a leading effect that is difficult to evaluate at this point. We can readily realize however the considerable impact this would have on an already weakened Sherbrooke economy. As regards employment the announcement made on October 3, 1977 gave rise to great interest. Mr. Speaker, it has always been our view that too many young people in the eastern townships and Sherbrooke had to leave our area because they could not find a job. It is abnormal indeed that people in the eastern townships and Sherbrooke, having acquired institutions of higher learning and great quality, cannot benefit from those investments. Many of them had to make sacrifices to build our two universities and our two junior colleges and today too many of our graduates have to leave for Montreal or elsewhere in Quebec, sometimes outside Quebec, to find a job. That seems to me