

Government Orders

payments, are one of the more positive reasons for the province of Quebec to stay as a part of Canada.

As the member knows, just in the last 10 years the fiscal transfers to the province of Quebec have been close to about \$40 billion. I sometimes wonder, and I know that many of my constituents in downtown Toronto wonder when we hear that Quebecers want to separate. We all understand the cultural aspect of this and the emotional feeling, but just from an economic reality it seems to me and to a lot of my constituents that it is a large sum of money.

Does the member think lately that the federal presence, the federal contribution to the province of Quebec has really not been communicated clearly enough or substantially enough?

If he shares the concern that I have that it is not being communicated, does he think that maybe a very intense federal presence campaign in the province of Quebec may lessen the desire for separation?

Mr. Edmonston: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Being a Quebecer, it is something I have to think about almost constantly.

It is interesting being from Quebec. One generally buys about five papers a day to get a fairly well-rounded idea of what actually happened. There are different stories coming from different perspectives, depending on whether it is a French or English paper. It could be said that both perspectives are true. It is not that there is some sort of a conspiracy or some sort of a campaign to kill an idea or to make a mockery of certain government programs or certain people who happen to call themselves federalists.

However, I believe that the presence of the federal government is badly explained to Quebecers. It is mainly because there is such a split in Quebec right now. The latest poll shows about 58 per cent of the people would vote for separation, for independence or sovereignty. By the way, all these words do not mean the same thing to Quebecers.

Independence is the hard line question, the declaration of independence, and I do not think that is as saleable as sovereignty or sovereignty association.

The federal presence unfortunately has to be promoted. We have to promote the idea of Quebec coming into Canada through administrative arrangements. We

do not need unanimity. We do not need what the separatists would say that we do need and that is Mr. Wells, Mr. Filmon and Mr. Getty and others on board. We can handle this thing administratively.

That is one of the things I enjoyed about the Dobbie-Beaudoin committee. We had the best minds working with us, the best people coming before us and enough time to come up with some specific proposals that gave latitude to Quebec without requiring all of the machinery and all of the acceptance from the other provinces.

Really, as much as Quebec has been criticized for not being specific enough, I think that the Dobbie-Beaudoin committee was very specific. I have no problem with defending its position.

In conclusion, I would like to say as a Quebecer that we are counting upon the other provinces to explain to us their own objections in ways that do not come out as simply meaning that we do not want bilingualism or we are unhappy with Quebec because Quebec has received more than its fair share. Quebec has not received more than its fair share and the question of bilingualism is really a red herring.

Mr. Mills: I am not sure that the member really got my point.

Nobody who believes in federalism would object to the \$40 billion of fiscal transfers that went to the province of Quebec in the last 10 years. If it is more than that, then so be it.

• (1320)

What people have a difficult time understanding is that we accept naturally and we should accept because it is part of being in a family of federalism, the fact that we help disadvantaged regions of our country. That is part of our social contract to use the member's expression. People have a tough time understanding—and I will bring it down to the smallest example experienced last weekend—when our national orchestra with over one-third of its members Quebecers goes into the province of Quebec it cannot play the national anthem. It is very tough to understand.

Obviously we are doing something wrong in our communication. This government is a pretty good communicator in my mind. We are doing something wrong in our communication of the federal presence when after \$40 billion of transfers we cannot play our national