

ployment that has increased at an excessive rate in the larger Montreal area.

A number of statistics could be quoted. I know that the House is practically submerged with statistics from various speakers, so I will abstain from bringing more, the purpose of my speech being to support this good piece of legislation brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien).

● (1622)

This is a bill for which I am personally grateful to him as a minister, because he pursues what had been announced by his predecessor, Mr. Macdonald, and the provisions of this bill will support the objectives of my own department. Take the investment tax credit—some feel it is not enough and I am inclined to agree, but I am pretty patient and systematic: I will proceed gradually—it went from 5 to 7.5 and now it is 10 per cent, and I hope we will succeed in increasing these figures in the next months or years.

I should like to conclude on a comment concerning the people of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean whom I represent here. I wish to thank them for the confidence they place in me and to assure them that my department is now working on several projects. We are aware of the potential of this area which is now unfortunately hard hit by a high rate of unemployment, but I have faith in the people of my area and in their dynamism. Judging from past experience and considering the achievements of these people in many areas, such as cooperation, industry, finance, with economic mutual funds among other things, I feel that our area will come through, with the assistance of the federal and provincial governments, and I hope the hon. member will realize that it is in his interest to cooperate with us and with the local people in order to ensure the development of those areas and sub-areas. I hope that all those measures will succeed in reducing unemployment, in creating jobs and in keeping our young people in our areas. We must strive to create jobs in order to keep them at home. It is of concern to me as a Canadian and as a Quebecer and as a citizen of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. I ask the House to consider this bill with all the attention it deserves but not to unduly delay its passage, so that we may proceed with other pieces of legislation likely to help the Canadian economy and our fellow citizens.

Mr. Béchard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Will the minister allow me a question?

Mr. Lessard: Of course, with your permission, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) may ask a question if the hon. member agrees.

Mr. Béchard: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. I would like to thank the hon. minister for having agreed to hear my question which is very serious. I know what are the feelings of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion who represents an area which, in many aspects, is similar to mine. Therefore, I

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would like to ask him if in his efforts and those of his department to eliminate regional disparities, his department is now doing something or some studies with regard to the mining development which is in progress in Îles-de-la-Madeleine—particularly the salt mine which is not in operation at the moment, but at the planning stage—I should also like to know if his department would eventually be interested in the bicarbonate of soda industry or plant which would be built once the salt mine in Îles-de-la-Madeleine is operational, and, this time, in the continental part of the constituency of Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, that is in Port Daniel. Furthermore, I would like to know what are the plans of the department regarding the funding of these two industries.

Mr. Lessard: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is interested in the development and the potential uses of the subsoil of that large area of the province of Quebec, that is the Gaspé region and Lower St. Lawrence and also Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It is not the largest part, but it is still important. That project relating to a salt deposit has been known now for several years, and its potential and profitability as well as market possibilities are still to be evaluated. It is a project conducted by a provincial Crown corporation, SOQUEM, that others and myself know quite well and follow very closely.

Now, about the other project, in Port Daniel, the potential of a deposit has also been identified, and, there again, it would seem that the project could be put in operation in a relatively reasonable time. Pursuant to an agreement between the government of Quebec and my department, work is now being carried out with regard to drilling and assessment of the potential in order to know whether or not the project could be put in operation in the near future. These two interesting projects might perhaps further develop the economy in the Lower St. Lawrence area.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I have now had just over five years in this House, during which time I have seen a lot of government budgets that have been criticized in one way or another. The members of my party have not criticized everything in those budgets, but we find our alternate suggestions are seldom taken up by the government.

Of course, the government has indicated that this is not a budget we are debating, it is a tax bill. When I look at the budget of March 31 and cast my eyes over the economic and fiscal statement of October 20 by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), I notice there is not much difference in their looks or their contents. The government has indicated that it is in a hurry to get this bill passed, but I think I should remind the House that this bill arises out of the budget statement of March 31 and that the government has had some seven months in which to get the bill passed by the House.

Since the debate started a few days ago, the government has been putting up speakers every day. Today we heard from the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard), and yesterday we heard from the Minister of Industry, Trade and