

*Government Orders*

This government may feel that Quebecers rejected the Charlottetown Agreement by mistake or because they were in a bad mood. But it would be wrong. Quebecers can see clearly. They want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. As long as they are in this imperialistic Confederation, the rest of Canada will think that Quebecers are the problem.

The Minister of Finance tried to convince us that his budget was a new form of federalism by attempting to decentralize some areas of jurisdiction, without transferring tax points, providing that Confederation partners comply with national objectives.

Quebec is a nation, a people. It has its own objectives and will never agree to be led by an imperial federalist government.

**Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for his excellent speech. I think he takes the interests of the Quebec transportation industry at heart, and he represents them well.

I would like him to touch on the possible implications of these cuts in transfer payments to the provinces, which the Minister of Finance indicated will be to the tune of \$7 billion over the next three years. Transfer cuts mean less money being paid to Quebec. At the same time, the federal government continues to tax Quebec at the same level. Moreover, tax hikes are imposed on Quebecers, representing a deficit of about \$6.5 billion for Quebec in taxes alone. Add to that some \$2.5 billion less coming back to Quebec every year, and this makes a shortfall of \$9 billion for the people of Quebec.

Instead of cutting taxes in Quebec, the federal government is cutting the share Quebec used to get. This makes for a rather significant shortfall, in fact a very significant shortfall for Quebecers. How can this be offset? As the Minister of Finance said, Quebec will have to either reduce public expenditures further or impose tax hikes Quebec taxpayers who are not only seeing their taxes go up instead of down, but receiving about \$2.5 billion less from the federal government every year, which is utterly unfair. It is important that the people of Quebec be reminded over and over again of this fact.

• (1545)

How does the transport critic see the transportation industry in Quebec being affected by this drastic drop in overall revenue?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Having been more than generous with the 10 minute period allotted to the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, I would ask that we get back on the right track, speaking of transportation. So, if he could keep his answer as short as possible, under two minutes in any case.

**Mr. Guimond:** Thank you Mr. Speaker for being so understanding.

I will answer the hon. member for Longueuil. The question comes unexpectedly, even though the member and I belong to the same party. We can make a comparison. I am convinced that when a Liberal member asks a question to a Liberal minister during question period, viewers in Canada and Quebec can tell that the answer has already been prepared. However, this is not the case here. I did not expect the question from the hon. member for Longueuil. However, I will try to answer it to the best of my knowledge.

**Some hon. members:** Ah, Ah!

**Mr. Guimond:** You can laugh if you want.

My colleague raises an interesting issue. I already had the opportunity to tell the Minister of Transport, in committee, that if the federal government privatizes or commercializes airports, ports and the St. Lawrence Seaway, Quebecers will have to ask themselves this crucial question during the upcoming referendum debate: Are we getting our money's worth, considering that we pay \$28 billion in taxes every year to Ottawa?

When the federal government is investing in Quebec, it is not giving anything to Quebecers. When elderly people receive a cheque with the maple leaf on the stub, it is not a donation from the federal: it is money which these people, their spouse or their children have contributed through taxes. Consequently, this question is very much to the point, as is the whole issue of how the provinces will be able to provide the required financing.

For example, the federal government wants to transfer some regional airports. These airports will be managed by the local community, because the provinces have clearly indicated that they do not want those regional airports, and indeed I think they would have been ill-advised to take on that responsibility. I received confidential minutes in which the following issue was raised: If the local authority cannot make a profit with the airport in Sept-Îles, which currently makes \$1.9 million in profit annually, what will happen? The federal airport in Sept-Îles will close. Consequently, will our taxes be adjusted accordingly? That is a very good question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I thank the hon. member for his co-operation. The hon. member for La Prairie.

**Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by drawing the attention of this House to the size of the federal government's debt and the fact that government measures have done so little to change a situation that has now become chronic. The government must balance its budget as soon as possible, because its credit is fading fast.

The 1995-96 estimates tabled by the Minister of Finance show that public debt charges now represent 30 per cent of