

Government Orders

received \$136 million, Northern Ontario only got \$30 million, that is \$6 million per year.

Consequently, last year, 45 million small trees were not planted because there was no money available. So, if Quebec does not want those federal contributions, I will be very pleased to accept them on behalf of my constituents.

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane): Mr. Speaker, in the Charlottetown accord, if that is what my hon. colleague is referring to, we did ask for total jurisdiction over forests. That is why we are going to have to hold a referendum: to obtain it. Quebec receives federal funding. It needs that money, and as long as we are part of this country, that is our money too.

As I said, Quebec did not sign the national strategy. We did not sign it. Sometimes deputy ministers travel. The fact remains that we did not sign. My hon. colleague from Ontario says that Quebec received millions of dollars, but then Ontario received transfer payments for regional development. So, there is compensation on both sides.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this: does he agree with me that the federal government has very long arms when it come to grabbing, controlling, strangling the provinces even more? We in Quebec object to that. We do not refuse the money. We need it. It is just that we should be compensated and that is precisely what Quebec has been asking for since Lesage and Johnson. That is what we are asking for, and we have been asking for this for over 30 years.

It seems to me that this bill goes beyond the purview of the Constitution. I would like him to comment on that.

• (1640)

Mr. Bélair: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to say that the amalgamation of two existing acts as in this case is always subject to Section 92(b) of the Constitution Act, 1867, which provided at the time that natural resources belonged to the provinces. That is exactly the point I was making earlier: these resources still belong to the provinces, but the federal government reserves the right to provide financial support to those provinces that want some.

Quebec benefits greatly from this, with the \$68 million it received from the federal government corresponding to the 68 Conservative members it used to have in this House. Quebec received a very fair share indeed. Again, if my hon. colleague is convinced that when Quebec gets its independence, its will no longer need federal funds, by all means send the money back!

Coming back to the Charlottetown Accord, Quebec rejected it, with all the implications this had.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): So did Ontario.

Mr. Bélair: That is right, but we are talking about Quebec here. We are not talking about Ontario but Quebec. My colleague also raised the issue of regional development. This bill is not about regional development, it is about agreements on forestry. The figures just quoted were derived exclusively from forest resource development agreements.

Regional development is a different matter altogether. Must I add in closing that, with respect to regional development, Quebec's share is about \$600 per capita, as compared to \$133 for northern Ontario?

[English]

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-48 is a bill which in principle I support and the New Democratic Party caucus supports in—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. I would like to hear all the statements, everyone in turn. We are now listening to the comments of the member for Regina—Lumsden.

[English]

Mr. Solomon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to share with the House and the members that the New Democratic Party caucus supports in principle the taking of the bill to committee.

The bill when it becomes law will amalgamate, as I understand it, under one minister the powers, duties and functions of the minister in the Department of Forestry Act and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Act.

The bill defines natural resources to include all areas covered in the Department of Forestry Act and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Act. The definition clause contains a definition of sustainable development, the same definition apparently as in the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

There is a requirement under the general duties clause for the minister to consider the integrated management and sustainable development of Canada's natural resources in carrying out the minister's duties and functions. The general duties clause of the bill reiterates some modifications to the duties in the Department of Forestry Act to make these duties apply to all natural resources. It also describes current activities of the department and is consistent with federal government responsibilities and priorities in the natural resources area.

A reorganization bill usually has many objectives and opportunities: either amalgamation, centralization, efficiency, streamlining, expansion or in many ways hiding budgetary expenditures. During the report to the committee I will be looking at some of these objectives of the bill.