

The Address—Mr. Pelletier

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that a good way to co-ordinate the economic policies that I mentioned earlier, would be to hold an economic conference on the area in question. At the first stage, we could hold a meeting in Sherbrooke, and at the second stage extend it to the whole region and in this manner we could exercise a greater pressure on the different levels of governments.

Let us first agree on the priorities, the directions at the Sherbrooke level, let us examine the specifics of action. When this is done, we can invite the greater area of the Eastern Townships to join us in a common development effort, because the economic development of the Sherbrooke area is very closely linked to that of the Eastern Townships, and vice versa. That economic summit, in addition to enabling us to see what the situation is and determine the directions to follow, will also enable us to establish the major priorities for the area over the next few years. I submit that this is essential. In the last few years, we had economic summits in our area on the textile, footwear and furniture industries, therefore an economic summit would enable us to know the state of all industries in Sherbrooke and give us the opportunity to decide on the direction we want to follow for our area.

Mr. Speaker, on October 27, 1983, the Parti Québécois' Eastern Township Caucus in a press conference announced that an economic summit would be held towards the end of 1984. And after announcing that summit, the president of the Council of P.Q. MLAs for the Eastern Townships during that press conference recalled, among other things, the origins and the reason for the economic summits, the formula for which, she said, had been developed by the Quebec Government and successfully tried in a number of regions.

Mr. Speaker, in November 1983 I received a letter from the Minister responsible for the area, the Honourable Raynald Fréchette. In that letter, dated November 11, 1983, he said: "For your information, I would like to indicate that the members of that Committee", he was referring to the Steering Committee of that economic summit, "will be elective representatives, businessmen, people with decision power in their areas, people with recognized impact in their community."

He proposed in particular that the Steering Committee of that economic summit should include 28 persons from the region. In a letter I sent him in early January, I humbly submitted two proposals: First, that Members of Parliament for the area have two seats, and second, that members of the National Assembly also have two seats. But unfortunately, that was not accepted, and he recently wrote and I quote: "The 24 members at that meeting reviewed the proposals included in your letter, and after discussion unanimously decided to accept neither of the two proposals."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to state, concerning that Regional Economic Summit, that Members of Parliament for the Eastern Townships will be represented, because we are given one seat. My regret, however, is that as things now stand, the Regional PQ Caucus of MLA for the Eastern Townships would have two seats, and the four Liberal Members in the National Assembly have not been invited.

It seems to me that they could have copied what was done in other Quebec regions, for instance in the area of my colleague for Terrebonne (Mr. Comtois) who was co-chairman, with a Minister from the National Assembly, at the De Lanaudière Economic Summit. And all participating MPs and MLAs took part in the discussions at that Economic Summit. For instance, the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), who is not a Liberal, and the Hon. Member for Terrebonne, as elected

representatives of the area, took part in their Economic Summit. Currently, Liberal Members of the National Assembly for the Eastern Townships are not invited. It is my hope, since we are at the early organizing stage of that Economic Summit, that Members of the Steering Committee will look at that aspect and ensure that all elected representatives for the Eastern Townships, whatever the level of Government, either MLAs or MPs also are invited to take part at that year-end Summit. For my part, I want to assure the organizers of that summit that federal members from Eastern Quebec will be there, that they will participate actively and that we will co-operate as much as we can in order to make a true success of this crucial economic summit.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch very briefly on an issue which in my view is certainly the most serious in Canada right now, that is unemployment, especially among youth. I recognize at the outset that the youth unemployment problem in Canada is not any easier to cope with than in any other country, and that the situation in this regard is still more dramatic in other areas of Canada than in my region. Youth unemployment is a social tragedy in Canada. We cannot allow these great talents to be lost in forced inactivity and anxiety about the future. For our country, for the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, energies lost today could be very costly if we do not endeavour right now to do everything possible in order to alleviate the situation and help young people who are looking for jobs, who want to work but cannot do so because of the present situation of the economy and also in many cases because of the very structure of the labour force.

At this point, I would like to extend special thanks to the Cabinet for having created a Ministry of State for Youth. Obviously, the Department of Youth will not solve all problems related to unemployment among young Canadians; however, this department will certainly help young people organize themselves and make representations to the government about programs that should be extended or created for them. Every week we have a great number of young people coming to our riding offices to ask us to do everything that we can in order to solve the problem of unemployment which affects them more severely than other segment of the population.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. I still have four pages of my speech left, but unfortunately, I—

Mr. Speaker: Order! I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but the time allocated to him has expired. Questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke express his concerns about unemployment. For the record, I wonder if he would indicate the extent of his concern. This week, in Ottawa, a large number of fishermen from the West Coast of British Columbia attempted to lobby him. Would he be prepared to state in the House whether he received that lobby and whether he made any commitment to contact the Minister or make any presentation in the House concerning the plight of the fishermen? An