

*Supply*

concept, very close to our culture. It is a treasure to the people of Quebec.

All those involved in this area agree. I would point out that, yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly passed a motion to once again remind the federal government of its position. When I speak of the Quebec National Assembly, I am not talking just about the members of the Parti Québécois, but also about the members of the Quebec Liberal Party.

Yesterday's motion was passed by a vote of 96 in favour, none against and no abstentions. It was therefore passed unanimously.

● (1210)

What does this resolution say? It says:

"That Quebec must have sole responsibility for policies pertaining to manpower adjustment and occupational training within its borders and patriate accordingly the funding allocated by the federal government to these programs in Quebec; "Within the current constitutional framework and in order to improve services to customers, Quebec must take over the control and management of various services pertaining to employment and manpower development and all programs that may be funded through the Unemployment Insurance Fund within Quebec's borders, and must therefore receive the funding appropriate to such responsibilities;

"The Government of Quebec and representatives of business, labour and the co-operative sector agree to oppose any initiative by the federal government that would constitute an invasion of Quebec's prerogatives".

Therefore, it asks the government and the Minister of Employment to immediately undertake formal discussions with the federal government in order to ensure the respect of the consensus and the promotion of the interests of the Quebec people.

I stress that this motion was adopted unanimously.

A while ago, after I shook my head at something he said, the minister introduced a historical dimension to the debate. I had mentioned 1941 a bit earlier when answering a colleague's question. I must make a correction, I was wrong by one year. The constitutional amendment enabling the federal government to set up and run the unemployment insurance program was passed on July 10, 1940. It was the British Parliament—as you know, we had to ask permission—which amended section 91 of the British North America Act, making it possible for the federal government to set up the unemployment insurance program.

It would be useful at this point to summarize Quebec's claims. Stakeholders in the labour market have recognized unanimously the need to patriate to Quebec all responsibilities and federal funding in the area of manpower training. The Liberal Party and the Parti québécois are in agreement on this.

It is also worth recalling that, in 1991, the former minister in charge of manpower, income security and manpower training claimed, in a policy statement from the Government of Quebec about manpower development: "For many years, Quebec has

claimed control over policy instruments affecting the work market. In other words, the Government of Quebec and its economic partners want laws, budgets, institutions, programs and services concerning manpower or the operation of the work market to come under a single authority. Partners on the Quebec work market are almost unanimous in recognizing that manpower policies must be prepared by authorities as close as possible to the various work markets".

This request for devolution of manpower training goes back a long way. In 1989, the job forum was a critical step in the advancement of this cause. This is when the job market partners, that is labour, management and government, agreed to ask that Ottawa hand over full responsibility for manpower training.

With such a consensus, the Government of Quebec officially requested, in December 1990, that any federal moneys for manpower programs be handed over to Quebec, including money from the unemployment insurance fund used for that purpose. In December 1990, the Liberal Party was in office, not the Parti Québécois, and Robert Bourassa was premier. The Liberal Party of Quebec claimed exclusive jurisdiction not only over manpower training, but also over other aspects of manpower development, such as placement, employment assistance, job creation support, etc.

● (1215)

To back up this demand, the Quebec government created the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, or SQDM, which was to serve as a link between all labour market stakeholders and to manage all manpower development programs in Quebec.

The Quebec Liberal Party went even further, asking for an administrative agreement allowing Quebec to manage the unemployment insurance program within the province. It was asking for a return to the pre-1840 situation. Quebec wanted to be given jurisdiction in this area.

Otherwise, the federal government would have to maintain a rather cumbersome administrative structure in Quebec. To make UI benefits and related services accessible to the Quebec people, a whole network would have to be maintained with all the inconveniences of this kind of duplication.

In concrete terms, this agreement would have resulted in the UI program running the SQDM.

This happened under the liberal government led by Robert Bourassa, a true blue federalist. Now, you will ask, what sort of problems is this situation creating in Quebec? At the same time, one must recognize that there is a problem with vocational training in Canada. In 1993, Canada was ranked 22nd out of 22 developed countries for on-the-job training.