

The clock is ticking away and, unless we pass this bill before the end of June, there will be no more money for the Federal Business Development Bank, to name one, and no more money for small and medium size businesses. One of the aims of this bill is to increase the capital available to these businesses as loans.

The hon. members say that no other province boasts so many regional offices. That is because the other provinces, like the four Atlantic provinces, have their own agency. I know at least 70 members from Ontario who would like to get their hands on the budget for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec to give it to Ontario, where the program does not even exist.

I am going to quote again the clause with which the hon. member seems to have so much difficulty. Clause 20 clearly says that “The Bank may enter into agreements with, and act as agent for, any department or agency of the government of Canada or a province—”

I am stopping here because I think he is stumbling on the word “province”. When he talks about the RCMs, municipalities and school boards of Quebec—I must agree that municipalities were created by the provincial government—that did not prevent us from signing the Canada–Quebec infrastructure agreement with all three levels of government.

• (1645)

Therefore, I fail to see why he should worry, because, in my opinion, there is no cause for worry. We can sign agreements with agencies, and if they fall under provincial jurisdiction, the agencies, for example a municipality, will be obliged by law to obtain the provincial government’s agreement.

There is no doubt in my mind that we are not trying to erode powers. What we are trying to do is resolve the problem many small and medium size businesses are having regarding access to capital. This bill aims to bring within their reach the \$50,000, \$60,000 or \$100,000 they need, which banks cannot offer them, at the moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Davenport—the environment.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to speak to the motion presented by the Bloc Québécois. It is a pleasure to do so, both personally and especially on behalf of the people of Quebec who will hear what we have to say about the federal government and its constant push for centralization. I will try to show how the federal government is centralizing powers at the expense of the provinces and especially Quebec.

Supply

Quebec is a nation that is truly distinct from Canada and that has always wanted to develop its potential according to its priorities—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. member for Vaudreuil, on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Discepola: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As far as I know Quebec is still a province. It is not a nation.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I realize that occasionally members may wish to get involved in the debate, but this is not a point of order.

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, this motion condemns the federal government for wanting to centralize powers through legislation, and more specifically, through Bills C-46, C-91, C-88 and C-76. Little by little, the government, acting as it were behind the scenes, has made the Canadian federation, and especially the government of that federation, the master of this Canadian destiny, while ignoring the people of Quebec who want to develop their potential according to their own priorities, their own culture, their own way of doing things. It is always the same old story.

The process is a very gradual and very discreet one, and if we look at the situation very carefully, we realize that gradually, the provinces, if the process is allowed to continue, would become regions that would merely act on decisions handed down by Ottawa, something Quebec will never except, since for years we have refused to become a part of this way of running Canada.

The federal government, and a Liberal one to boot, says it wants a flexible and open federation, but at the same time it decides to centralize and give itself certain powers without further consultation. As my colleague said, there have been no federal–provincial meetings since this Liberal government was elected. Why? Because it is independent. It thinks it is the only government in Canada that should determine the future of this country. It does not consult the provinces, and it goes ahead, slowly but surely, little by little, very discreetly. It is very smart about the way it is doing this, but we in the Bloc Québécois, who came to Ottawa to defend the interests of Quebec and promote the sovereignty of Quebec because we felt we had to do this, we cannot let this go on.

• (1650)

I would remind you that this desire to centralize powers in Ottawa is not new. Sixty years ago, Mr. Duplessis was elected in Quebec in 1936 on a platform of: “Il faut rapatrier notre butin”. I remember by father and grandfather voted for Mr. Duplessis, who was Quebec’s premier for many years and who got elected on the platform of: “Il faut rapatrier notre butin d’Ottawa”. Quebecers’ mistrust of the federal government is not new. In