

Supply

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier also mentioned that a period of time should be allotted to consider reports from the public accounts committee and I think that is what the hon. member for Richelieu was alluding to. It is not enough simply to table a report. I agree with what others before me have said, namely that time should be allotted for the serious consideration of reports of this nature.

• (1230)

As for the last question raised by the hon. member for Richelieu, namely whether a committee should be struck to review spending item by item, of course I think this would be the best approach, certainly preferable to a motion such as the one put forward today by the hon. member for St. Albert which touches on certain aspects, but overlooks others. I think the motion we presented yesterday was much broader and, as the hon. member for Richelieu said, it would provide a much better overview of Canada's public finances.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. member for St. Albert as well as the Reform Party for having tabled this motion in the House today because, on the whole, this motion goes along the line of what the Bloc Québécois is requesting.

We agree in principle with the motion of course, as it recommends a complete follow-up on this famous Report of the Auditor General of Canada, a report that every one should have read and that I recommend to the public. People can get a copy for free.

However, we believe that this motion does not go far enough. Only a tiny part of government expenditures are audited by the Auditor General and appear in this book, a book which unfortunately more often than not gathers dust on a shelf.

The Auditor General of Canada himself says, and I quote: "Most of the time, Parliament does not get adequate information on what government departments and agencies have accomplished with the billions of dollars from taxpayers".

We are all aware of the terrible state of government finances. We are aware of the burden of the debt on Canadians and Quebecers, a burden that sadly our children may inherit. We are aware of the unemployment rate, which is not coming down, of the bankruptcies and of the hardship they bring about.

I must remind you by the way that the suicide rate among young people is higher in Quebec today than in any other industrialized country in the world. Such an incidence is a clear indication of how much young Canadians have lost hope in the future.

Through all this, Quebec is a little poorer than other provinces and ends up receiving, through federal tax transfers, quite a bit

of assistance. But I think it would be a good idea to look at why Quebec finds itself in that situation.

We must understand that Quebec gives \$28 billion to Canada. That is nearly 25 per cent of federal revenue and if we check the federal government expenditure items, we will see that in most cases we lose out.

Let me give you a few short examples, as this is not the main thrust of my speech. In research and development, between 1979 and 1989, federal departments invested about 18.5 per cent of their R and D funds in Quebec, while we provided 25 per cent of Canada's revenue. There definitely is a shortfall, not only in the money not being reinvested in Quebec but also in terms of the beneficial effect of such investments on job creation because it is well known that research and development is one of the factors stimulating job creation.

With respect to federal investments in Quebec, while we have provided approximately 25 per cent of federal revenue in Canada from 1973 to 1993, we have been getting back 18 per cent on average. There is a 6 or 7 per cent shortfall there. And I will remind you that these investments amount to billions of dollars. This means that billions of dollars are not being pumped back into Quebec's economy to create jobs, but are being provided in a different way, through tax transfers for social benefits.

• (1235)

I am pointing out these two items but, if we look at the whole picture, we can see that, in the last 20 to 25 years, Quebec's economy is, for lack of a better word, gradually transferring to Ontario precisely because of federal investments causing our economy to disintegrate. The Auto Pact, for example, encouraged all car manufacturers to locate in Ontario. None of them came to Quebec. The digging of the St. Lawrence Seaway, which was, of course, a very beneficial project in general for Canada, had long-term negative effects for the port of Montreal because, with shipping going through to the Great Lakes, there were successive lay-offs over the years at the port of Montreal. The Borden line, which we will be discussing at length, I am sure, in the coming months, encouraged petrochemical plants to move from Montreal's east end where my constituency is to central Ontario, to Sarnia.

That move resulted in thousands and thousands of jobs lost in Quebec, in a sector I know well as I worked for oil companies putting floating covers on oil tanks across Canada, in the United States, in Texas; it is a sector I know well. As a result, people who were making very good salaries lost their jobs; today these people are on unemployment or on welfare. We lost thousands of jobs because of a federal policy and now these people are collecting welfare benefits.

We can also look at airports. As you may recall, a few years ago, Mr. Trudeau decided to build another airport because of congestion at the Dorval airport. So Mirabel was built at a cost