

Supply

• (1550)

Now let us look at some of the reasons why the tourist industry in the Province of Quebec is not doing as well as in the other provinces, despite the fact that Quebec is probably closest to the largest population centres in North America, if we consider Toronto, Ottawa, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and so forth. One of the major reasons why the tourist industry in Quebec is not doing as well as it should, is that it costs \$3,084 to create one job in the tourist industry, while in Ontario, it only costs \$2,077. Only Alberta has higher figures for the cost of creating jobs.

Let us we compare now the performance of other provinces to that of the Province of Quebec as far as the tourist industry is concerned. In New Brunswick the industry is growing steadily and represents 5.7 per cent of the province's total industry, while in the Province of Quebec, this figure is only 5.4 per cent.

If we look at what is happening in the other provinces, the Province of Ontario, which certainly does not have twice the population of Quebec, does have more than twice the gross income from tourism, namely, \$8.9 billion, while in the Province of Quebec, this figure is approximately \$5.2 billion. In Ontario, tourism accounts for 6.3 per cent of the total industry, while in the Province of Quebec, it is only 5.4 per cent. And so it goes across Canada. Although Quebec has so many advantages and natural beauty spots to offer, it happens to be the province where the tourist industry is the weakest.

In the next few minutes, Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to consider the main reasons for this very serious situation. First of all, let us consider the harassing measures introduced by the present Quebec Government in recent years. My colleagues may recall the introduction of Bill 101, Bill 17 and Bill 43, as well as higher taxes—much higher where gas is concerned. The excise tax on liquor is much higher than the Canadian average. Municipal taxes are in many cases higher than all taxes levied by other provinces.

A few years ago, figures showed that the annual tax burden per room and per year for a hotel like the Queen Elizabeth in Montreal was \$1,800. The hotel had to pay, per room and per year, a total of \$1,800 for all kinds of taxes: municipal taxes, school taxes, property taxes, liquor taxes, taxes on bar licences, dining rooms, etc., while for the competition in the industry—and I am referring to the tourist industry in Boston or Philadelphia or Vermont or Niagara Falls—the total tax burden was from \$300 to \$800, which in many cases meant much less than half the tax burden on hotels in the Province of Quebec. Bill 101 . . . Obviously, people who are going to turn their backs on the Province of Quebec as an interesting place to visit are not going to write to the Quebec Department of Tourism or its Canadian counterpart to explain: "I am sorry, but the last time we went, we had to stop quite often to ask for directions because there were no signs in our language . . . And if you think only French Canadians live in the Province of

Quebec and those are the only people you care to have, we intend to go elsewhere."

This is probably why, Mr. Speaker, the figures for Ontario, which I gave earlier, show a much better performance in the tourist industry. While in Ontario, as I said earlier, the industry accounted for almost \$9 billion, or \$8.9 billion, to be exact, in Quebec the figure was barely \$5 billion. Almost half!

I hope that the future Liberal Government of Mr. Bourassa will correct the injustices caused by Bill 101 and repair the damage done to the tourist industry in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 43 is sheer nonsense because it will force the tourist industry to pay higher salaries to its workers and to those who receive part of their salary in tips. The whole industry will be in turmoil because some employers will have to increase pay rates for their staff, and then turn around and fire some of them, with the ultimate result that tourists will no longer have the first class service to which they are entitled. That is one of the difficulties.

So now we have a new Minister, the MNA for the riding of Prévost which I know is tourist-oriented, because I live there. I hope that the new Minister will heed the representations which will be made to him, to the Government and to his predecessor by the people who work in the tourist industry. I hope that those people who work in the restaurant industry will be able to convince the Minister and the PQ Government that this Bill will create many problems for the tourist industry. And the same thing goes for Bill 17, Mr. Speaker. Under that legislation, restaurants and hotels would have to close their doors if a handful of unionized workers were to decide to go on strike, because even the owner, his wife and their family are prohibited from providing services while employees are out on strike. There is increasing talk about more restaurant employees being forced to join unions, so it is altogether absurd to introduce such a Bill at a time when unemployment is rampant in the Province of Quebec.

Let us talk about other taxes of every kind and every description. A tax has been imposed on clients which come mainly from Montreal and are on their way to the Laurentians. In addition to gas taxes which are much higher than anywhere else in the rest of Canada, they now have to pay on average no less than \$4 or \$5 every time they use the roads. It is the only region in Canada where people are so harshly penalized and have to pay to drive on highways.

Mind you, if the Laurentian Autoroute was a paying proposition because of the tolls collected, others could be turned into toll roads. Unfortunately, despite its high tolls, the autoroute is always in the red because the accounting and the institution established by the provincial Government have made it impossible to write off the outstanding debts of the Régie des autoroutes. Quite simply, one has to admit that the operating costs take up a major share of revenues.