

ment problems and difficulties that exist in the province of Quebec, particularly in so far as they relate to the need for adjustment and restructuring.

The hon. minister of health will be providing a leadership role and working very closely with the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister responsible for International Trade.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Speaker, I am glad to see the Minister of National Health and Welfare just arrived in the House. Perhaps he would care to remember that when he was Minister of Industry, it was his lack of initiative that put the Quebec economy in the catastrophic situation it is in today. In Quebec, more than 12 per cent of the labour force is unemployed. More than 400,000 people are looking for work, without success. In the Montreal region alone, 213,000 people are jobless. Every day, plants are closing down and employees are being laid off at Air Canada, VIA Rail, Canadian Pacific, Pratt & Whitney, General Motors and Canadair. Why doesn't the minister simply rise in his seat and admit that when he was Minister of Industry, he messed up and he is going to mess up again?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, when Quebecers hear the Leader of the Opposition giving economic advice, they should remember what happened when he was Minister of Finance, which should be some consolation.

Mr. Speaker, what was reported in *Le Devoir* this morning is simply an administrative measure that gives the minister responsible for economic development in Quebec a management framework. I must say there are quite a few contradictions in what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. He tells us we should look after Quebec's economy, but when we provide a framework for this purpose, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't like it. I don't know what his position will be tomorrow. As far as I am concerned, the federal government has for years been involved in Quebec's regional development through federal-provincial agreements. The responsibility I will have—as soon as a framework has been provided—for

regional economic development in Quebec will be similar to the responsibilities I had as Minister of Industry.

Mr. Speaker, I think Quebecers have no trouble understanding these nuances, and the leader of the Opposition should be able to understand them as well.

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Speaker, I think the framework announced by the minister is just a house of cards. I would now like to ask him a technical question. Before embarking on this exercise in public relations, did he consult the Government of Quebec.

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, when the Government of Canada—and I trust the hon. member will agree—defines its administrative structures, I would be very surprised to hear that he did so when he was a minister and his government was in power. We have to consult the provinces on the way the federal government's obligations are to be structured. Mr. Speaker, I repeat what I said earlier. This has no connection whatsoever. Once again, the Government of Canada defines its administrative structures and it does so effectively, something the Liberal Party is not in the habit of doing.

**Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister, who just gave a fine example of why we have problems with national unity in the country. In announcing the development agency, the minister is doing in Quebec what his government did in the Maritimes with ACOA. It is a smoke screen to hide the cuts in funding for transport, research and development, transfer payments. The Atlantic Region has suffered a net loss of \$3.4 billion. My question is: Can the minister promise that starting today, there will be no less funds for all economic development in Quebec? Can he assure us that he is not fooling Quebec as his government fooled the Atlantic provinces?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, first I will tell the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard that it is absolutely not an agency. I do not know where he got that idea from, probably from *Le Devoir*, but the reporter was careful enough to give both options. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the Liberal Party, which should applaud the Atlantic Agency initiative, seems to want to