

by members of Parliament in the House. It is an abdication of their responsibility.

[Translation]

Mrs. Guay: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question asked by the hon. member, I would like to say that we will all work in committees, but it is federal expenditures as a whole that need to be examined. At the moment, I think this task is divided among various committees, but our motion goes way beyond the study of a particular area of expenditure by a committee.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's comments and I agree with her that overlap and duplication are two different concepts. We talk about overlap as if it was the same thing as duplication. The latter can imply waste of money, but the former is not unusual in a federation like Canada.

According to our Constitution, there are only two areas that I can think of where there is no duplication and they are postal services and defence. In all other areas, duplication is a fact of life in a federation. We will try to eliminate waste as much as possible, waste being the unjustifiable spending of public money. I agree with the hon. member that we should try to eliminate duplication.

However, I would remind her that it is not easy to get rid of overlaps. As chairman of the Public Accounts Committee for three years, I had tried to convince the previous government, and maybe members of this House, that it was worth letting the Auditor General table reports on specific issues as he saw fit to draw the attention of members of Parliament to administrative problems.

Maybe the hon. member did not know it, but I submitted a bill to this House, Bill C-207, I think, which would have allowed the Auditor General to table reports on selected issues whenever he wanted. Right now, he can only table one annual report. The hon. member is right when she says that it is quite thick and sometimes difficult to read, and that even the committee finds it difficult to act on its recommendations. Would the hon. member and her party support a measure like the one I advocated to authorize the Auditor General to table reports on selected issues whenever he wants?

Mrs. Guay: Mr. Speaker, we are not against the principle but we must study the question further. As for duplication, the hon. member is right, some duplication is unavoidable. We try to eliminate duplication in order to reduce costs, to save money, to become more efficient.

This is not the case now in several areas and I think that you are well aware that that situation has been with us for many years. It is high time to empower a special committee to study

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all those questions, all forms of waste. Such a committee could, for the first time, I think, be very effective and it could produce fresh new solutions and maybe an alternative to the system we use presently to manage public funds.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the first substantial speech I have the opportunity to make in this House, I would like first of all to greet all the constituents of the riding of Châteauguay. Nestled by the borders of Quebec, Ontario and the United States, this part of the area called Montérégie is located southwest of Montreal. Previously made up of rural towns and villages, this riding has become over the years one of the suburbs of the largest French metropolis in North America.

In the west of the riding lies the city of Châteauguay with a population of about 40,000 people who for the most part work on the island of Montreal.

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In the east, there is a group of towns that have become industrial centres. In the south, some other towns were able to save farmlands from urban development. The northern part of the riding is taken up by the Mohawk reserve.

In the riding of Châteauguay, we know what federal presence means. It means the St. Lawrence Seaway and, through it, the demise of the port of Montreal; it means the development of Sarnia, in Ontario, through the transfer of the petrochemical industry from the east end of Montreal; it means the Kahnawake reserve and the closing of the Mercier bridge during the Indian crisis in the summer of 1990. It also meant war measures in 1970 and conscription for the two world wars, and I could go on.

For many years, the federal presence has meant only trouble, worry, indecisiveness, lack of determination and, most of all, poor management of public funds. That is why so many Quebecers are increasingly looking at sovereignty for Quebec.

At a time when the deficit is reaching proportions beyond the comprehension of most people, all of us here in this House are challenged to resolve this monstrous problem. Citizens have lost confidence in the capacity of governments to control expenditures. We do not have any grace period to regain that confidence. We must act now and act effectively. From now on we will have to live within our means and our capacity to pay.

Yesterday the Bloc Québécois caucus had the opportunity to meet the Conseil du patronat du Québec. Established in 1969, this group of employers has 547 members, 430 of which are corporations or associations actively involved in developing Quebec economy. That most influential organization told us about its concerns with regard to public spending, among other things.