

Supply

This FORD-Q we are talking about is everywhere in Quebec. We call it the delivery arm, seeing that this agency signs memoranda of understanding with other departments, which in turn deliver services, having themselves signed MOUs with the Federal Bank.

We have put questions to the Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency as well as the Minister of Industry for Ontario, and none of them was aware of the existence of a delivery arm elsewhere in Canada. None of these development authorities had heard about agreements or MOUs between departments. Incredible efforts are made in Quebec in terms of federal interference in regional development.

I would like to tell the hon. member for Vaudreuil that the position taken by the official opposition should come as no surprise to him. After all, he said that Quebec is a prime mover and a leader in regional development. This fact was stated quite simply.

In Quebec, we have a decentralized sectorial and political structure. The powers related to regional development were delegated to various organizations accountable to the Quebec government. Some of these organizations are present in the hon. member's riding of Vaudreuil, and he knows these structures. There are regional county municipalities, municipalities, school boards, CEGEPs, universities, regional health boards, Quebec manpower development societies, regional manpower councils and regional development councils. All these organizations are established in the province's 16 administrative regions and are accountable to the Quebec government.

Moreover, there is an act respecting the ministère du Conseil exécutif, which provides that the Quebec government is the only authority which can sign development agreements, or any other type of agreement, with other governments.

Yet, through its bills, the federal government is assuming the authority to unilaterally interfere by reaching agreements with organizations which are under Quebec's jurisdiction. This is a flat rejection of a Quebec law, as well as a flat denial of the Quebec government's jurisdiction over regional development.

The legislation on the business development bank of Canada, which seeks to allow agreements with federal or provincial departments and organizations, as well as with any other body or individual, goes so far as to say that the bank could act as agent for such organizations. This is a direct and blatant attempt to take over regional development, by totalling bypassing the Quebec government and dismissing its authority.

• (1640)

I want to tell the hon. member for Vaudreuil that, in August 1991, some of his Quebec Liberal colleagues denounced the establishment, by order in council, of the federal office of regional development in Quebec. Indeed, the Quebec Liberal minister responsible for regional development, Yvon Picotte, was quick to react to the order in council confirming the establishment of a federal department of regional development and the appointment of a deputy minister in that department. Mr. Picotte said that, under the more discreet title of Federal Office of Regional Development for Quebec, the new department could, in the medium term, end up costing Quebec regions a lot. The federal government does not have the expertise to ensure that the subsidized projects will match the regional development priorities that were set these last few years by all of the stakeholders within each of Quebec's regions." He also said: "It is obvious that, with this federal approach, Quebec is faced with a *fait accompli* through orders in council."

What do we find in the bills which are central to today's debate? Exactly the same thing. Let us not forget that it was his Liberal friends from Quebec who protested. I should add that the then Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations, Mr. Rémillard, stated on August 8, 1991, that the government of Quebec was determined to stop co-operating with the federal government in the area of regional development.

The Quebec minister reminds us of the conditions for approval—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order! I think we all understand that the question and comment period can lead to debate. I would certainly like to give the hon. member for Vaudreuil the opportunity to answer these comments and questions. I would ask the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe to conclude so that our colleague can answer.

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was getting to my question. Given all these facts, which are not necessarily the work of the Bloc Québécois, but are the results of all the negotiations held throughout the years with our Liberal colleagues opposite, who protested against our approach, how can the hon. member for Vaudreuil forget to mention the direct impact these bills will have on regional development and control, and refuse to recognize that Quebec has exclusive jurisdiction in this area?

Mr. Discepolo: Mr. Speaker, the industry committee has been examining this bill for three days now and here, in the House, the minister has now been trying to allay the hon. member's fears for two or three days. With each passing day, I realize that his understanding of this bill's role is getting lesser and lesser.