every group, whether it be the overall population, the number of companies, the number of UI beneficiaries, etc.

This shows just how illogical the decision is. It is a decision which goes against the department's own criteria.

The change is upsetting for Trois–Rivières residents, because it has to do with the establishment of regional centres. Yet, the government wants to go to Shawinigan and just keep a local centre in Trois–Rivières, in spite of the fact that the latter is recognized as the main centre in the region. This is totally unacceptable, and we will continue, along with the other stakeholders, to denounce the situation.

We have to know what it will mean in day–to–day terms. People will come to apply in Trois–Rivières, since the role of sub–offices, like the one intended for Trois–Rivières, is to receive applications for benefits, and take information only without making any analysis or any ruling, and then pass on the information to the regional management centre, which will from then on keep the actual file of the claimant's application. When an application will need, as three out of four applications do, further attention or special analysis, the whole operation, any action, will be directed from Shawinigan twice as often to Trois–Rivière because of the population pool.

At present, for unemployment insurance, the department's investigations, which are routine in some cases, are made in Trois–Rivières, as are complaints made to the board of referees, since the actual file is in Trois–Rivières. In answer to the letter we wrote to make the appropriate representations about the intended move, the minister indicated that services will not be altered in any way for the people of Trois–Rivières. However, from now on, contrary to what the minister said in his letter, the department's investigations and the appeals to the board of referees will be made in Shawinigan and from Shawinigan, which altering, to use the minister's word, operations as they now stand.

We therefore question the good faith of the minister who, in our opinion, is trying to fool the population when he says such things.

You have to be aware that the project was developed, or the decision made, without any consultation. It was announced just before the House recessed, or just before the change of rhythm that occurs in our society at the beginning of the summer holidays, since the announcement was made on June 22 and later confirmed in late July or early August, at a time when it is practically impossible to mobilize the population. What a nice approach, somewhat in keeping with the minister's image.

I remind you that this was done without any consultation, both locally and regionally, and regardless of the regional dialogue that goes on in our area, the Mauricie.

• (1140)

I remind you also, as was confirmed to me yesterday by reliable sources, that there has been no comparative analysis of the impact of keeping the centre in Trois–Rivières, which used to be the focal point, instead of moving it to Shawinigan. They did not study the impact on the population, users or costs. I will deal with that later on.

One of the effects is that Bécancour, a community traditionally and naturally linked with Trois–Rivières, particularly as regards the manpower operations at the regional office in Trois–Rivières, will now have to deal with Drummondville, a choice that is arbitrary and inconsistent with the practices in our region, and makes no sense.

Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with this area would know things do not work that way. That is one of the reasons why my colleagues for Richelieu and Champlain and I agreed to a joint position and condemned the move, because our ridings are affected in various ways. This is a good example of the kind of co–operation that can come about when people want to co–operate.

Another aspect, which is just as revolting, is that this move will be detrimental to those most in need, people who have just lost their job and find themselves in a state of vulnerability they had not experienced before.

These people will feel increasingly uncomfortable in dealing with a system decreasingly at their service. Besides, what we have here is technological change of a type that will dehumanize relations between the department and people in need like the unemployed, seniors—who will feel the impact of that move—, people on welfare and community organizations which, as we know, rely heavily on volunteers and government assistance. Things have been made more difficult for them, and that is why this move should be condemned.

The government can choose one of three solutions if it wants to mend its ways. First, it could maintain the status quo, deal with existing circumstances, respect the wishes of the local population and users, and keep the centre in Trois–Rivières. Everybody would be happy.

A second alternative would be to have a regional office in Trois–Rivières for the whole area, including Bécancour, and give Shawinigan the status of a regional centre for the north shore, including Saint–Tite. The situation would be similar to that of Gaspé or Sept–Îles, something that could make sense. It would be up to the hon. member for Saint–Maurice to demonstrate that such an alternative makes sense.

Third, the most absurd alternative would be to set up a regional management centre in Shawinigan to serve the whole region, a decision we will always condemn.