

Government Orders

Same thing for the defence infrastructure. Only 13 per cent of the defence infrastructure is in Quebec while our contribution is 25 per cent. The budgetary cuts in this area, as a result of which—as you know—1,000 people end up unemployed, are going to widen that gap since officer-cadets from the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean who are going to leave for Kingston are going to be the source of additional defence spending and infrastructure in Ontario to the detriment of Quebec.

The same applies to the military base and the language school. Given the circumstances, teachers would have to leave Quebec to go and teach in other parts of Canada, which would again lead to an increase in the budgets everywhere but in Quebec and widen the gap.

You certainly know also that Quebec will do without the helicopter contract; in fact, we had asked the liberal government to cancel that program. This already represents on the part of Quebec a sacrifice of 1.7 billion dollars. Unfortunately, the government has neglected our recommendation to establish a fund for industrial conversion, which would be a better option than cutting UI benefits and which would allow people laid-off in the military sector to be retrained for positions in other sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, for the time being, that solution is not accepted by the government, which prefers to go after the unemployed with Bill C-17.

I want to come back to the military college and say again that it is an illogical decision from an economic point of view. It has already been proven that in terms of costs per officer-cadet, Saint-Jean College costs a lot less than the two other military colleges. It costs \$58,000 per year to train an officer-cadet at Saint-Jean compared to \$71,000 at Kingston. We can see therefore the illogical situation created by the Liberal government's decision to close down a military college clearly more productive than other institutions.

As regards the military base of Saint-Jean, you know that it is the most modern in Canada. So how can you explain that a base which cost \$180 million will be almost completely shut down since its activities are going to be reduced by 75 per cent?

These are issues we cannot remain silent about. In the case of the language school—and I have documents to prove it—Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Addy of Saint-Hubert wrote the following—and I have his letters here—to his brother, Brigadier-General C.J. Addy: Maybe the issue should be reconsidered because the solution will be more costly than keeping things the way they are. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are also facing an illogical situation here.

We must also remember the historical context in which the construction of the military base took place. That is very important. It was built following a Liberal promise. At that time, there were three major projects underway in the Montreal area. There was Mirabel to the north; Place Guy-Favreau on the

island of Montreal; and the base of Saint-Jean to the south of the Montreal Island. It is also illogical because these promises now lie broken and it is Quebec and Saint-Jean that must bear the consequences.

• (1155)

I will say nothing on the death of bilingualism because it was mentioned several times and I am trying to limit myself to fiscal arguments. However, the government had other choices to make. Take for example the ERYX missile project for which the total is now \$212 million. At the time, the current Minister of Human Resources Development condemned that project; he disapproved of the amount of money the Tory government wanted to pump into it, some \$11 million. Now the government's budget projections show that this project will reach \$212 million. All this for a short-range anti-armour weapon system which does not even appear on the list of weapons required by the Canadian Forces in Bosnia. It is not even recognized by the UN as an effective weapon.

So we have a hard time understanding why the government chose to close a college with a long standing reputation and to pump money into a weapon which produces no positive results except the squandering of public funds.

It is often said that the Maritime Provinces are also victims of plant closures, but nobody talks about the fact that they want to build coastal defence vessels. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, these would be used to clear mines from our ports and harbours, as if the Russians were in a position to lay mines there these days. That in our view is an absolute waste of \$746 million. On that point also, I think the budget choices of the government are totally illogical.

There is also the fact that if the officer-cadets currently in Saint-Jean were moved to Kingston, we would have to expand the facilities there and we will still have to pay grants in lieu of taxes in Saint-Jean, even if the building is empty.

A very interesting CROP survey concerning the city of Saint-Jean was published last week. It shows that the government is not backing down and still intends to close the military college and move it to Kingston. We think that the cost of adding to the Kingston facilities and laying off surplus teachers will more than offset any potential saving. This choice was not about saving money, it was not about bilingualism, it was not about culture, it was only, as I said before, about politics. This decision to hit Saint-Jean with the closure of the college was a political one.

The point I am trying to make is that it was a reckless gesture and that the government is not seizing the opportunity to convert the defence industry. We could put money in a defence conversion fund which would help save military industries, while at the same time ensuring that such monies are awarded in a fair and equitable fashion across Canada, as it should be in the Confed-