

*Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech made by the hon. member from Vanier. In my opinion this was a very interesting speech. The hon. member described rather accurately the behaviour of the Conservatives, that is the government, regarding the debt. Of course that debt started to grow under a Liberal government of which my colleague was a member. In fact it can be said that this debt started to grow about 20 years ago.

Nevertheless, the hon. member made a pretty accurate description of the problem but he forgot in my opinion, to elaborate a bit on the actions necessary to reduce that debt. We the members of the Bloc Québécois believe that the main reason for this debt is bad management, primarily the result of overlapping jurisdictions of the provinces and the federal government. That aspect was overlooked by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

In fact, the experts of the Bélanger-Campeau commission concluded, and these findings were supported by other experts from France and Great Britain, that this overlapping between Quebec and Ottawa alone amounts to some \$2.5 to \$3 billion a year in unnecessary administration costs. Moreover, we do not see all the consequences and losses of this mismanagement, which has a negative impact on government revenue, and I am only referring to overlapping between Quebec and Ottawa.

However if you look at all the other provinces this overlapping may represent \$10 to \$12 billion in operating costs, not to mention of course the losses due to this inefficient system. Again, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier did not mention this aspect.

I would appreciate his opinion on this. It is all right to describe what is going on but solutions must also be suggested. The solution that we, Bloc Québécois members propose is a decentralization of powers. Quebec must absolutely manage its affairs according to its own priorities. This way, we will help this country, whose debt, as we just learned, is considered by the United Nations experts to be equal to that of developing countries.

• (1755)

I am asking the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier to at least suggest some solutions, since he was a member of that Liberal government for a while.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, solutions do exist. The problem of duplication between levels of government is a major one and we must resolve it. I think that the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has come up with a novel idea today that we should consider seriously. He has suggested that the three orders of government—federal, provincial and municipal—work together to reduce this national debt which could be as high as \$575 billion altogether.

He has suggested that, since all of them have stewardship obligations—this may not be the best word to describe the idea I want to convey; anyway, governments have to account for the money collected from the taxpayers and the expenses made on their behalf—some kind of balance should be reached. To shift responsibilities as we have been doing for the past few years from the top, federal level to the provinces, which in turn shift the load onto the municipalities, is no solution because there are some very important players or participants involved. There are cities like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and other major cities that have a larger population and economy than some provinces but are not involved in setting the monetary or economic policies of this country.

We Liberals have proposed a trilateral conference, so to speak, to bring together the main stakeholders at the federal, provincial and municipal levels so that, together, we can find a solution. It is a matter of stewardship. It is a matter of collective will to solve our problem without passing on to the next level of government, down the line, so to speak, social and financial costs it cannot afford.

[English]

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, first I want to compliment my hon. and learned friend from Vanier who indeed has an established reputation in this House for accountability of government, both in government and in opposition. I believe that in municipal politics and as a school trustee he also established that reputation for accountability. I very much appreciate and respect the points he has made.