

The Address

program took form. But it is also in that same document that one can see clearly the confusion surrounding that project.

Indeed, since the government announced that infrastructure renewal program, those concerned do not know what to expect from the federal government. When you think about what the population expects in terms of economic development, you can rightfully speak of—

[English]

Mr. Harvard: Madam Speaker, a point of order. We are not getting the translation. I want to bring that to the attention of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): We will check the matter right away. Thank you.

[Translation]

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is there consent to suspend the sitting for a few minutes to look into the problem with regard to interpretation?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(At 4.17 p.m. the sitting of the house was suspended.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 4.19 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The Chair will be expecting a report from the Clerk regarding the interpretation problem. I want to advise the member for Ahuntsic that he is still entitled to his full allotted time of 20 minutes. He now has the floor.

• (1620)

Mr. Daviault: Such an interruption during a maiden speech is rather startling. I will start again then, Madam Speaker. Once more, I wish you all the best in your new position. You may be assured of our full co-operation.

I will also remind the House that the riding of Ahuntsic, which I represent, has always been at the heart of the national debate in Quebec. It was represented by prominent federalists such as Jeanne Sauvé and Raymond Garneau. At the provincial level, prominent sovereignists such as Jacques Parizeau and Jean Campeau, whom I hope will be our next finance minister in Quebec City, ran for election in that riding. It is therefore a great privilege for me to represent it.

As opposition critic for infrastructure, I would like to voice some of my concerns regarding the program being implemented by the new government.

The Liberal Party of Canada was elected on the strength of its red book. The infrastructure project took form in that same

book. And it is clearly from that policy paper that stems the confusion regarding this project. Indeed, since the infrastructure program was announced, those concerned have not known what to expect from the federal government. When you are aware of the people's expectations in terms of economic development, you are fully justified in asking the government for more details on what it intends to do in that particular area.

The tough economic times we are experiencing put all levels of government in an uncomfortable position. Given these trying circumstances, it is extremely important to look at how the needed funds promised by the federal government will be allocated and where the money will come from.

To begin with, I would like to refer to a statement made by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and which was reported in *La Presse* last November 21. Mention was made of the fact that the provincial governments were in such a weakened economic state that their powers to negotiate with the federal government were virtually non-existent.

The minister stated the following: "So far, I have met with most provincial representatives and I have observed that their fiscal problems make them much more open to reason than they ever were during the last two or three decades".

This kind of statement by the minister leads one to believe that might is right and that the federal government intends to take advantage of the economic hardships of the provinces to once again infringe upon provincial areas of jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the infrastructure program could lead to constitutional infringement and our party will denounce any kind of interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Traditionally, the principal area in which the federal government has intruded to a significant degree for many decades is spending power. Spending power is linked to the federal debt which has surpassed the critical \$500 billion mark. We object to this spending power and will continue to do so.

May I remind the government that section 92(8) of the Constitution Act, 1867 gives the provinces jurisdiction over municipal institutions.

The federal government is forever reminding us that the provincial governments will be responsible for implementing the infrastructure program. Why then is the federal government taking so much time to negotiate with the provinces to ensure that the money invested in the program will satisfy its criteria and requirements?

In his address in reply to the throne speech, the minister responsible for the infrastructure program, the President of the Treasury Board, emphasized the need for some elements of consistency and I quote: "All the provinces the federal government will review projects in relation to broad program criteria". The conclusion is obvious. In fact, the government is interfering with project management.