

Municipal Grants Act

As a matter of fact, I learned a few days ago that the Canadian Government had granted to the Lauzon Skiing Centre the amount of \$100,000 to provide ski lifts, snow-making machines and lights so that the skiers of the Lauzon region could practice their sport over a longer period, in the evenings, and also in somewhat better conditions. However, officials of the Quebec Department of Municipal Affairs, and Mr. Léonard, as well as the officials of the Lévis region very likely got in touch with the Quebec Government, an investigation was launched and we shall probably never be able to give to the Lauzon Skiing Centre the \$100,000 we had announced. In fact, we shall probably have to get this money back because it has been decided that Bill 38, which has not yet been passed, still applies. Because of this, yesterday, or rather Monday, Mr. Léonard told the owners of the skiing centre that they would have to look somewhere else and could not count on these \$100,000. Under the circumstances, I can understand why the mayor, the councillors and the officials of the City of Lauzon have said no, because this would disrupt their budget for next year as they were given a very clear warning: "If you receive one cent from the federal Government, it will be taken away or there will be an attempt to take it away some other way". I do not think that anyone administering a budget at a local level such as a municipality, can hold on if someone tells him that, in six months, X dollars may be deducted from the amount that municipality would have otherwise received under the taxation system.

We have to look at the whole context. What I am asking today is that Bill C-4 be amended so that we may include dry docks when calculating the amount of grants in lieu of taxes in the future. I know that this would meet a very local need, but I believe that it would show that the Canadian Government is an even better citizen than the Quebec Government, which can only complain even though it is much more often at fault than the Canadian Government, and I am sure that, in this case, this amendment would be useful to the officials of the City of Lauzon, who are extremely important officials in our democracy and if they have all the money they need to administer their municipality, they can certainly be more independent towards the present Quebec Government and resist its efforts to take away their autonomy. In view of the circumstances, I therefore ask this House to support my motion.

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I want to take advantage of this opportunity to make a few comments on the motion tabled by the Member for Lévis (Mr. Gourde). We are of course well aware of the fact that the federal Government ought to behave like a good citizen and pay taxes according to the properties it owns in various areas in our country, not only in Lauzon but across Canada. I quite agree with the principle of the recommendation made by the Member for Lévis today. I shall comment later on some remarks which had no connection with his actual recommendation. The fact remains that facilities similar or identical to those in Lauzon also exist, for

instance, in Selkirk, Manitoba and Esquimalt, British Columbia. I think the Member for Lévis will agree that his proposal should have extended beyond his riding and included all facilities similar to the ones he wishes to protect, and the municipalities, and I think that if the Government is going to do something for a municipality to correct a situation where the federal presence is not paying a reasonable amount of taxes, I think it should do the same for any municipality with similar facilities across Canada. I think that logic and the law oblige us to speak for all municipalities that might be concerned by this recommendation, namely, the federal Government should pay a normal amount of taxes.

● (1650)

The House is aware that since 1980, Bill C-4 has been providing such protection and ensures that municipalities receive grants in lieu of taxes. The federal Government uses the word grants, and I must object very strenuously when the Member for Lévis makes a comparison between the Government of Quebec and the federal Government in connection with the grants the federal Government is prepared to pay in the riding of Lévis or other municipalities, and I am still referring to certain facilities, and when he makes a comparison between grants and draws or infers certain conclusions with respect to Quebec Bill 38 which has not yet been adopted. Just the same, where the Canadian Government is concerned, there is no need for Quebec to say that the Canadian Government pays its taxes, that it behaves like a good citizen and that it subsidizes the people of Quebec. The grant we are discussing here is nothing but a property tax paid by the Canadian Government. Then this is not the kind of grant often referred to by Quebec, namely for employment programs, programs that can generate work for community services. At this stage, I have serious reservations with respect to the Hon. Member for Lévis, namely that on both sides there is a lack of adjustments with regard to the agreements and a lack of co-operation, and I understand that Quebec is once again in the process of negotiating possible agreements with the Canadian government, and I would appreciate it if the Canadian government were to respond as quickly as possible, and if Quebec were to do its share also in seeking solutions that would of course be acceptable to the Quebecers, who are Canadians as much as you and I, Mr. Speaker.

In the circumstances, I feel that the Hon. Member for Lévis has very poorly substantiated his point when he simply suggested that his proposal could be held as evidence that the Canadian government is a better citizen than Quebec. I do not think this could impress many of us here, Mr. Speaker. That is not the issue. The Hon. Member for Lévis is making a suggestion. He is advising the Government, his own Government in the first place, to pay its taxes to the City of Lévis. Nothing could be more legitimate. Although I have nothing to do with the constituency of Lévis, I agree that of course the Canadian Government should pay its taxes to the City of