

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

part of law enforcement officers, no matter whether they are in the courts, members of the local police force or of other forces in the area.

• (10:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION—ABITIBI—
CONSTRUCTION OF ACCESS ROAD

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, on February 4, I asked the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) if he had received from the La Sarre Chamber of Commerce a letter requesting financial assistance for the completion of an access road to the Villebois resources, towards James Bay, in northwestern Quebec. The minister was not allowed to answer.

The following day, I received a phone call from a public servant, telling me the said letter had just been found and, having looked into it, the minister authorized a reply. I do not know whether that reply will be favourable or not but I should like to say tonight why the La Sarre Chamber of Commerce has appealed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

First, we know the minister heads a department which is supposed to assist in the development of underdeveloped areas. Now, in our area there is a lack of development and employment. Several families have to move to other areas and a great part of our labour force must earn a living in the neighbouring province.

Now, faced with our governments' inaction, businessmen in the area decided, after much consideration and reflection, to undertake the building of a road leading to the sea and to new natural resources, which are abundant in that vast area.

Under the direction of the local Chamber of Commerce, farmers, workers, woodcutters, miners and businessmen, and even unemployed people, contributed more than a quarter of a million dollars to clear the ground.

The Quebec government, while claiming to look favourably upon the building of such a road to James Bay, showed themselves sparing of their assistance. The Department of Forestry conceded a few woodcutting rights and granted a \$60,000 subsidy to build a road 130 miles long. In my opinion, this is merely an agreement in principle.

The Chamber of Commerce is therefore asking for assistance from the federal government. The parliamentary secretary to the minister (Mr. O'Connell) may answer that he

[Mr. McIlraith.]

cannot disregard the guidelines of the provincial government about roads and that the Quebec province should seek the assistance of the federal government. If my information is correct, the Quebec province has recently made an application for a \$200 million subsidy which was turned down by the federal government.

There is one thing, however, which is annoying the people of Quebec. Under the guise of the sacrosanct autonomy, we are ready to pay taxes for the other provinces while depriving ourselves of the same advantages.

It is well known that around 1966, the Canadian government passed a law allocating around \$100 million for the building of roads in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon in the next ten years.

We have nothing against the government building roads in the Northwest Territories in order to reach the wealth lying there. However, there are also resources in the northern part of Quebec and Quebecers are paying taxes to build roads in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

But we, for the sake of provincial autonomy, are depriving ourselves of the same advantages. We forget—God knows why,—to ask the co-operation of the federal government.

For instance, in 1965-67, we spent \$4,465,000 to build roads in the Yukon, and we spent \$4,590,500 in the Northwest Territories during the same period.

On April 8, 1969, we were told that within a few weeks, the building of 77 miles of highways between Fort Providence and Fort Simpson would be under way, for a lump sum of \$2,404,000.

Yet, it was announced, in March 1969, that Ottawa would invest \$343 million in Prince Edward Island which has a population of roughly 115,000, while the vast area of northwestern Quebec has a population of 180,000.

In view of these facts, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion came personally to Rouyn-Noranda, a few weeks ago, to meet the representatives of the La Sarre Chamber of Commerce, who it seems advised him of their financial needs. The minister then expressed the view that he was in favour of the idea.

The minister will assuredly answer that he cannot do it directly. However, I know he quite often has the opportunity of meeting Quebec ministers and talking with them. I am