

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard many fine words about Bill C-96 over the past two weeks. I will quote some words said on Monday because they sum up one of the main reasons we need to proceed with the bill.

One member said: "The key to the future is a good training program based on the manpower requirements of the region in which they live. It is certainly not here in Ottawa, far from my region and others, that public officials can determine the best training programs for my constituents. They are too far away and they do not know about our specific needs. Therefore the decision making process regarding manpower training must be closer to those concerned".

• (1125)

Bringing decision making closer to those concerned is perhaps the simplest way to describe the principle underlying Bill C-96. What is interesting is that the person who described it in this way was none other than the member for Chicoutimi.

I am very pleased to see that the Bloc Quebecois, despite all its rhetoric, agrees with the basic intention of the bill. The government is decentralizing labour market programs more than ever before so that individuals and communities are empowered to make real decisions that affect their lives.

If the member truly believes this is the right thing to do, and it is, he has every reason to endorse the bill. Of course the member goes on to describe the bill as unacceptable to Quebecers. His colleague, the member for Blainville—Deux—Montagnes, goes so far as to describe Bill C-96 as a steamroller of centralizing and anti-social legislation. I can only assume this is merely a lapse into the Bloc's more picturesque rhetoric.

I urge the member for Chicoutimi to trust his first instincts and recognize the bill for the ground breaking decentralizing legislation it is.

Everyone in the House recognizes there is a need to forge better partnerships, better working relationships between the federal and provincial governments. This is precisely why the federal government has invited the provinces to talk about new arrangements for labour market programs. We have made it clear that we fully respect the integrity of provincial jurisdiction in the area of training. We want to find a better way to work together.

Bill C-96 is a concrete illustration of this desire. The Minister of Human Resources Development said on November 9: "One of the direct results of the department will be to give far more

space for provincial governments to begin to make decisions at their level of responsibility and jurisdiction. The time has come for us to take a much closer look at the respective roles and to build bridges to bring us together".

Our actions as a government, the initiatives taken with this department over the past two years, also demonstrate this desire to work with the provinces and address their concerns. Surely the time has come for all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, to rise above the old-fashioned turf wars and start finding ways to work together, to bring our resources together and to help the people we serve.

The Bloc, on the other hand, seems intent on blocking the very progress it professes to believe in. Instead of urging us on, instead of supporting positive, constructive action, it throws up this wall of words. Under the banner of jurisdiction the Bloc says we should do nothing. In the name of progress and change I say let us find better ways to do our job.

We cannot do a better job by building walls that keep us apart. We need a better philosophy. We need the kind of philosophy the minister outlined when he spoke of the need to empower communities and individuals to make more choices. What does the Bloc Quebecois saying response? No. Individuals should not be empowered to make more choices. That is the philosophy of the Bloc Quebecois.

We need the kind of philosophy the minister outlined when he spoke of new partnerships: government with the private sector, government with the school boards, government with the provinces. What does the Bloc say in response? No. We do not want to work together for change.

Is it any wonder so many people in Quebec feel abandoned? The member for Chicoutimi speaks with concern for his riding, which has the highest unemployment rate in Canada. How can he expect to help Canadians in his riding with a do nothing philosophy?

How can we hope to help the people of Chicoutimi by saying: "You cannot have this awful federalist Bill C-96. You cannot have a system that gives you the power and resources you need to build better lives and get good jobs. It is not the Bloc Quebecois way.

This is plain nonsense. Quebecers and all Canadians deserve something better than that. The one million Quebecers who turn to HRDC for help each year deserve the best help they can get. The more than 164,000 Quebecers we helped find jobs last year deserve that help. The 44,789 students who found employment last summer deserve those jobs.