

*The Address—Mr. Côté*

responsible, immediately proved itself to be a major tool in promoting both Canadian and foreign investments in this country.

Thus, the Government was able to ensure the free inflow of the capital required to develop the many resources of our country and see that they are used for the economic renewal of all our regions. As you know, a major part of the Speech from the Throne deals with this issue of industrial and regional development. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss this subject further. Regional development remains one of our main priorities. Economic and social conditions have obviously improved throughout Canada in the last two years. Economic renewal continues and our social policy is already having noticeable results. However, as a Government committed to eliminate regional disparities, we must unfortunately recognize that, in spite of decades of efforts and billions of dollars, there are still gross employment and income inequities in certain regions. The Government therefore intends to make a renewed and firm commitment that each region in the country must achieve its full potential.

As mentioned by the Prime Minister in the Throne Speech, the Government intends to reassess a number of programs related to regional development. We are convinced that this evaluation should be made with three very clear and specific principles in mind.

First, we believe that regional development must come from the potential and the people of each region. Experience has shown that, with appropriate assistance, Canadians have the will, the determination and the ability to stimulate the development of their regional economies.

Second, our economic development programs and the administration and provision of our services to businesses must be much more decentralized than they are now.

Third, our decision-making and benefit-paying mechanisms should be much more efficient, faster and more sensitive to the users' interests.

A review of our regional development programs will continue in co-operation with provincial governments. As Hon. Members in this House are aware, consultations will resume at the highest level on October 17 in Charlottetown, when the Prime Minister meets with the Premiers of the Atlantic Provinces.

Mr. Speaker, much has already been done through the federal-provincial committee of Ministers in charge of Regional Economic Development. I would like to indicate that the committee already has met six times since February 1985. A committee of officials will be submitting a report to us later this year, and its recommendations should help us implement our commitment to prevent wasting even one single dollar in that vital effort for Canada.

[English]

As you know from the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will be

established without undue delay, bearing in mind the need to consult with provincial Governments and the region's business and community leaders. The mandate and organization of the agency will reflect the three principles I have already described, that is, development based on human resources and opportunities in the Atlantic Provinces, with decentralized decision-making and better delivery.

I emphasize that these principles will guide our efforts, not only in Atlantic Canada but in all parts of Canada as well, particularly in western Canada where special emphasis will be given to diversifying the region's economic base. This will clearly confirm the Government's commitment to balanced economic growth in every part of this beautiful country. Just as Canada cannot afford to neglect the important contribution all regions make to the national good, neither can we afford to have half our population performing at less than its full potential.

● (1250)

Women, in particular, suffer from the inequities built into our society. They are doubly disadvantaged if economic difficulties in their region adversely affect their employment potential and the quality of their family lives.

As this Government seeks to address regional disparity, women will undoubtedly provide important guidance about the right approaches and the much needed policy initiatives. It is my hope that they will enjoy more and better employment and personal opportunities as their communities are revitalized. Women will be part of the new partnership formed between the federal Government and Canada's regions. It is my belief that they will share equally in the prosperity and the stability that will be the result.

However, this is only one side of the equation. We are vitally committed to enhancing the development of industry everywhere in Canada. With this in mind, we intend to re-examine our main industrial support program, the Industrial Regional Development Program, or IRDP.

This program was introduced by the previous Government to meet a multiplicity of objectives, perhaps too many objectives. The complexity of the program and the differential treatment of some areas has meant, among other things, that the Government has not been able to support a number of quality projects, particularly in western Canada. We intend to look very closely at the effectiveness of the existing tier system that determines the level of support that can be provided to projects in various regions.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, in the course of that review of the RIDP, we will also consider the various possible ways of responding to one of the basic concerns of this Government, that is productivity.

The search for productivity is essential to allow and ensure the development of new manufacturing processes and also to