

Industry, Science and Technology

If that remark of the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion typifies the Government's attitude toward northern development the North is in big trouble.

For the benefit of those who do not already know, the mandate of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is very much broader than economic development. It encompasses political and social responsibilities. By no means can the economic development budget of that Department be equated to the Western Diversification Program.

This year the Western Economic Diversification Program has a budget of \$287 million. By contrast, the economic development portion of the Northern Affairs program this year is \$73 million.

It is true that the Territorial Government receives funding in the form of transfer payments from the federal Government. This year the Northwest Territories will receive \$822.2 million and the Yukon will receive \$225.1 million in transfer payments. But these federal transfers go to all the provinces as well. The North is not receiving anymore than any other Government. In fact, I believe it is receiving less than it ought to receive.

I would like the Government to give serious consideration to the establishment of a northern development agency. The Northwest Territories cover an area of 3.3 million square kilometres. It constitutes roughly one-third of Canada's land mass. Our location poses some severe economic restraints such as remoteness from prime North American markets, long winters and higher utility and other costs. Our population is small and scattered and the education levels for a large part of the population could be higher. However, we have an abundance of resources and people with energy, ideas and motivation. What we need is more encouragement and support from this Government.

Settling land claims will provide economic stability and, I hope, will provide the north Indian, Inuit and Métis people with the resources they require to be full partners in northern and Canadian economies. Building the northern economy requires commitment and investment. The North must have control of its resources and the development of those resources. What we require from the federal Government are the tools and the authority to get the job done.

Before I conclude, I want to also touch on native economic development which is, according to the Government, an important component of the Department of Industry, Science and Technology. The Native Economic Development Program was established by the previous Liberal Government in 1981. The program was to run for four years with a budget of \$345 million. In the last Parliament the Conservative Government extended the program for another year. It expired at the end of March but applications in the system already will be considered until the end of July.

Aboriginal people are wondering what program the Government will bring in to replace the Native Economic Development Program. It appears from comments by the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Andre) last week that a new program, to be called the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Program, will soon be announced. It seems from the outset that the new program will be an amalgamation of the Native Economic Development Programs from a number of Departments such as Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Employment and other programs such as the special ARDA.

Aboriginal people are anxious to know whether the new program will be adequate to meet the economic needs that exist among the aboriginal people and the aboriginal communities. The Government knows that the economic conditions of the aboriginal people are the poorest in the country. Over half the aboriginal population is under the age of 25. These young people want jobs and economic opportunities.

The Government in its Throne Speech, as well as in other releases, has said that the priorities will be in native economic development and it seems that one of the ways in which the Government will attempt to do it is to combine or consolidate the different programs that already exist. However, that does not address the need for more funding in order to accommodate the large population of aboriginal people across Canada. The problem with that announcement is that the Government will not be renewing the Native Economic Development Program or putting any new money in place of that program to compensate for the expiration of that program. We have to press the Government to ensure that it does not simply consolidate the funding of the different programs and call it a new program but that it adds more money to the Native Economic Development