

*Regional Development*

It states that the Minister is to lead and co-ordinate the efforts of the Government of Canada, to establish co-operative relationships with the provinces, with business, with labour and with private and public organizations for the development and diversification of the economy of western Canada.

The legislation also talks about regional input into policy formation, tapping the views, experience and wisdom of western Canadians and calling upon westerners at every level to come forth with new ideas to help develop a policy.

The Minister is responsible for ensuring that the most significant contribution of the Western Diversification Program on the western economy will come from westerners themselves participating in the formation of federal economic development policies. That section of the Act ensures western Canadians have input and that westerners get to the cabinet table. The climate also eliminates antagonism and fosters co-operation that has to take place between the various provinces and interested parties.

We are creating a country where equality of economic opportunity exists for all regions of the land, and the Western Diversification Program is a reflection of this. Decentralization of decision making and knowing that the decision makers are in the West is key to the success of this initiative. Consultation with provincial Ministers and other westerners from all walks of life, who each contributed so much to the program in the first place, will continue to be ongoing on a sustained basis.

One of the difficulties with Regional Development Programs in the past has been what I call bureaucratic overload. The flow of paper has caused the plugging up of various programs. It was difficult for those Canadians affected by various programs to access these programs. Western diversification has built into its structure a policy of cutting through the red tape rather than creating it.

For example, in order to become involved in a western diversification project, one does not have to complete an elaborate application form; simply write a letter with a basic idea and one is automatically plugged into the system. If the project involves a new product, a new technology, new markets, productivity improvements or import replacements for western Canada, it has a good chance of being funded.

These five areas feed on one another. For example, a new product for the West often means new technology, new markets. It is about giving that extra push to new ideas which are in abundance in the West and which will reduce the West's dependence on the traditional sector.

As a westerner, I know the possibilities of the economic enhancement of western Canada. They are actually endless. There are tremendous opportunities there for business people if they are given the chance and the opportunity to develop their products.

As a truly national Government with strong representation from the West, we have changed the traditional approach to Regional Development Programs. The Western Diversification Program is administered in the West, with the best interests of western Canadians always being the priority.

This new approach of regional development has been undertaken by a Government that understands the West and is committed to addressing western concerns. In Alberta, across western Canada and throughout this nation, western diversification is working. The Atlantic regional agency is working in the Atlantic provinces. We have throughout Canada an opportunity to develop our potential.

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Madam Speaker, I rise today in debate to speak on this very important and thoughtful motion put by the Hon. Member from Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon). It is indeed timely that this motion comes up today, just a few days after the most disastrous Budget Atlantic Canada has ever had inflicted upon it.

Over the past four years, but more particularly over the past five months, we have seen the Tory Party and this Government set about to unravel the unique fabric built on trust, caring and compassion of Canada and respective Canadian Governments; a vision of a nation rich in resources that used its great wealth in a thoughtful and prudent manner to try to overcome the obstacles of geography; a nation where we believed that it was important to use these resources to equalize opportunity for those that live great distances from the centre of this country in Atlantic Canada, northern Ontario, eastern Ontario and western Canada; a nation that believed that one had the right to expect to be able to earn a living in the region of one's choice, not simply raise one's family to have them go down the road to Toronto.