

Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987

of the closure of the heavy water plant to help in the process of economic rejuvenation in that area. Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation will have the same mandate.

I have made representations to extend the mandate of both these corporations throughout all my riding. I have worked particularly with the Town of Canso in making representations in this regard. The reality is that the boundary would stop in that area directly affected by the closure of the heavy water plant, which in a direct way forms part of the port. While that was not the best result for me, it was a big improvement.

It was consistently argued in respect of the mainland side of the Strait of Canso that we cannot take the incentives off Cape Breton without knowing where to draw the line. It was a difficult question and presumably explains why my predecessor, who represented both sides of the Strait of Canso, did not expand the special programs that applied to Cape Breton to the mainland side of the causeway. That had a negative impact on the community just across the water.

This measure helps alleviate some of that difficulty. I look forward to the day when these boundaries are expanded again to include all of Guysborough County and Antigonish County, two areas that I also represent. I believe that we have set an important precedent. The boundaries do not have to stop at Cape Breton because a balanced strategy of economic development can and should be achieved. I am proud that I have been able to convince the Government to move the boundary further west because that did not happen under the previous Government.

I know there are Members in the House who would like those benefits extended to their ridings, and even some who would like them extended to Newfoundland. We should not deny the people who have this benefit the opportunity to participate because it does not extend far enough.

This amendment is an important achievement because it brings these incentives to thousands of industrial acres in the County of Guysborough. That fact alone will benefit many additional thousands of people. Hopefully, with economic development, they will be able to commute to this area for employment. I welcome the support of my colleagues for this important change.

There are other features of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency that I believe will result in improved economic opportunities. I have already mentioned participation and local control, but have not touched on another mandate of this agency, namely, its advocacy role. What does that mean? This agency will play a role when important decisions are being made by other government Departments. ACOA has been given the opportunity to inject itself into the policy-making and decision-making of other Departments. ACOA can be represented at the cabinet table. Atlantic Canadians can give their input into decisions because ACOA is mandated by the Government to be its advocate. For example, it can advocate that more defence spending occur in the Atlantic region.

Let there be no mistake about the important role that a bureaucracy can play when it is given the mandate as public servants to be advocates who will ensure that we are involved in any decisions affecting the interests of Atlantic Canada that reach the cabinet table.

This should not be an indication of weakness on the part of Members from Atlantic Canada. We too have an important political role to play, but ACOA gives support and I, as a Member of Parliament, welcome that support from the region. That is another important role to be played by this regional agency.

• (1540)

We know that policies in the past have not realized the goals we had hoped to reach and we have committed ourselves as a Government to put in place a new strategy, and that is what we have done. There is local input, local control, a new budget and additional money. We have said to the people of Atlantic Canada: "You have a role to play and we want you to play it. We want your ideas and input and we want you to participate in achieving greater economic opportunities". That is the mandate we have given this corporation, and it is a mandate that is welcomed by the people of Atlantic Canada.

In closing, I would like to make a few comments on the establishment of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation itself. That corporation is something which takes the industrial development division of Devco, puts it into a new separate Crown corporation, mandated by this legislation, an Act of Parliament, and tells it to go forward and do that which the industrial development division of Devco was doing but in a new corporate entity with a new board of directors. I support that. There are some who do not. It seems to me they do not support it because they are attempting to hold onto the past. The fact is that the Cape Breton Development Corporation was established to wind down the coal mines. We have the industrial development division which is supposed to improve economic opportunities for Cape Breton. What would happen if the coal industry turned around? Since the early 1970s Devco has been chiefly a coal mining company.

The priorities of industrial development in Cape Breton have not received the adequate attention of a board of directors. There are always priorities in the coal industry. This new corporation, which has the powers of the industrial development division of Devco, will be able to focus on industrial development. It will be able to do so with a separate board of directors, which does not have to worry about coal prices for that day or about negotiating contracts with the many hundreds of coal miners. We have a new Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, which is an improvement, an autonomous industrial development corporation, that will work with the Enterprise Cape Breton Agency.

The Enterprise Cape Breton Agency has worked, and so will the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. The Enterprise Cape Breton Agency has committed over \$150 million to business