

programs. Second, co-ordinators will be responsible for reporting back to Ministers on every economic priority of the particular region and Province. They will be co-ordinating and chairing economic development committees involving citizens and, provincial representatives in order to determine what the priorities are in each region. Then at the Cabinet level, those regional priorities can be co-ordinated with our national priorities and national goals. I do not apologize for putting those important decision-making and consultative functions at the provincial and regional level. On the contrary, I applaud this move. I would hope that Members from the Opposition would at least recognize that this is a step forward and has many benefits. It will help us here in Ottawa to determine what our local and national priorities are but more particularly it will help the people in the regions to make their views known.

Another aspect is to replace the general development agreements with new agreements called economic and regional development agreements. These new agreements, to be entered into with each of the Provinces, is another attempt by a federal Government to demonstrate our respect for provincial and regional economic priorities. We feel the way to work these out is in co-operation and consultation with the various regions. My Minister has already entered into extensive consultations with six Provinces. Others are slated for the future.

Another concern I have heard expressed is that we no longer have a regional fund available to devote to priorities as determined by the particular regions and in the particular regions. Let me refute this very strongly. For example, in Atlantic Canada in 1981-1982 the amount of funds committed was \$155.9 million. This year, 1982-1983, under the new system we are devoting \$214 million, a large increase. Comparable figures for Quebec are rising from \$98 million to \$124 million; for Ontario, from \$33 million to \$40 million; and for western Canada, from \$94 million to \$101 million.

● (1210)

The Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre told us that he resented the increases in the funding we are making available. I hope he has the courage to visit the particular regions which have been benefiting and to tell them that we are wrong to be setting an economic priority on their particular development needs.

I do not regret the fact that we are undertaking these initiatives in consultation, co-operation and on a co-ordinating basis with the regions and the Provinces. We will be able to parallel our regional incentives programs with those of the provincial Governments. Is that not the way it should be done? There is no reason that these programs should be in conflict. Surely the interests of the Provinces are our interests when it comes to this type of economic development.

Another aspect which the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre criticized was the fact that we allocated \$75 million this year, and at least that many dollars in succeeding fiscal years, to target specifically on DREE-style projects that involve multi-sectoral planning in particular regions. This fund of \$75 million will not be subject to the arbitrary whim of the

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Government because we have set criteria for it. Those criteria are public and the allocation of the funds will be public. They will go—and we have stated this specifically—only to the poorest regions in Canada. The purpose is to give them projects to help them create infrastructure which will aid them in recovery. They will be applied on a graduated four-tier scale basis aimed selectively at particular sub-regions which need them most. We will be able to use these funds to lever and buttress the efforts of the private sector to bring about development. Surely this is the best way to create lasting jobs; surely this is the best way to give people the skills to use the resources of the private sector and work in co-operation with it.

All the changes I have mentioned are, to my way of thinking and certainly to the Government's way of thinking, positive moves in an attempt to deal with the difficult problems we face in Canada today. In addition to these funds, the new system of consultation, the new system of respecting local needs, the new delivery mechanism and consultation method through federal economic development co-ordinators in each region, Canadians should not overlook the fact that we have a system of equalization and economic opportunity in Canada that has been worked out over many years but which I think is a very noble, worth-while and effective approach. It is one in which the six poorest Provinces in Canada receive federal transfers from all taxpayers to bring their standard of living up from between 57 per cent and 79 per cent of the national average to between 90 per cent and 99 per cent of the national average. This is the essence of what Canada stands for—co-operation and sharing. This is something of which we as Canadians can be extremely proud. It is a right and a principle we find enshrined in our new Constitution.

[*Translation*]

Finally, I would like to say that what we are proposing in the legislation before the House should increase our ability to serve Canada's regions and Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are Hon. Members rising to ask questions of the Hon. Member who has just spoken? The Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm).

Mr. Domm: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the proceedings today. I do not wish to detract from the opportunity to ask questions of the Hon. Member for Willowdale, (Mr. Peterson), but I would like to point out that there could be a dress or undress problem in the House today. I know there is very little in the records dealing with Hon. Members wearing short sleeves in the House of Commons, but there is a definite reference in Beauséne to the "conservative, contemporary standards" of dress which are acceptable in the House. Also I draw attention of the Hon. Member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke to some of the debates on dress which have taken place in the House. It would be a sad day when the House of Commons accepts short sleeves—