

Private Members' Business

ployment, reduction of regional disparities between regions and technological development of businesses.

When we came into office in 1984, we agreed to pursue the industrial and regional development program, the IRDP, established in 1983 by the previous government. This program was to promote industrial and regional expansion by supporting private sector initiatives that offered the most opportunities for profitability, sustained growth and competitiveness in the international arena.

Even if the program was of national scope, the degree of assistance given to businesses varied depending on the level of social and economical development in the region where the projects were. So, the more a region was disadvantaged in terms of unemployment and income, among other things, the more assistance it might receive. So, the IRDP was taking into account the economic disparities, not only from region to region nationally, but also between different parts of the same province like Quebec.

The IRDP, by promoting the establishment of new plants and the modernization of existing ones, helped create and maintain thousand of jobs throughout Quebec. The program also had an "innovation" facet which helped promote technological innovation and development in a number of Quebec industries.

Anxious to adapt our regional development policies to the specific needs of the various regions, our government signed with the Quebec government, in 1988, a multisectorial and multiregional agreement for economic development. With a view toward harmonizing the actions of both levels of government and maximizing their impact, the agreement's main objectives were to speed the economic growth of the various regions of Quebec and increase the participation of local populations in the work force.

The five-year agreement has a budget of \$820 million, \$440 million of which, that is 54 per cent, coming from the federal government. I must emphasize, that the major part of the funds, \$486 million, will be allocated to areas with a resource-based economy, as their industrial base is not very diversified and often fragile, and also because these areas are far from the main urban centres and have a much higher rate of unemployment. This is

particularly true of my own riding of Abitibi, and the riding of Temiscamingue, in Northern Quebec.

In areas where the economy is resource-based, initiatives come under five distinct headings: Business development, Technological development, Natural resources development, Strengthening of economic infrastructures and Human resources development.

That is why specific initiatives have been put in place in the agri-food industry, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as for the enhancement of the industrial and tourist sector. Also, we have just announced an innovations assistance program.

As for the central regions, we have established a manufacturing productivity strengthening program, and we support seven initiatives for the development of the Montreal area. We have announced recently two programs, a depressed areas assistance program and an innovations assistance program. And the hon. member for Essex—Windsor could read in the record the statement I made in this House about the state of progress of this agreement with the province of Quebec. The hon. member will see that it is the member for Roberval, the hon. Benoît Bouchard who has done his homework and not minister Gil Rémillard.

Furthermore, the federal government promotes regional development in Quebec through subsidiary development agreements within specific sectors or areas. As early as 1985, our government and that of Quebec agreed upon a set of subsidiary development agreements in forestry and mining, the agri-food industry, fisheries, tourism, home entertainment products, transportation, communications as well as science and technology.

A total of \$1.4 billion has been earmarked for those various sectoral agreements. The money was divided equally between Canada and Quebec. It includes an amount of \$150 million that was covered by a draft agreement and was distributed in March 1990 into seven sectoral agreements.

By the same token, we prolonged most of the sectoral agreements until March 1991. Needless to say many measures and initiatives put into place under those agreements will contribute considerably to the development of Quebec regions.