

Regional Development

I wish to restate that the present federal Government is determined to promote regional development in Quebec. They proved it by spending a lot of money to that end. From 1979-80 to 1983-84, federal expenditures on regional development in Québec averaged \$189 million a year. From 1984-85, when a new Conservative Government took power, to 1988-89, those expenditures increased to an average of \$246 million a year. For the five-year period ending this year, they came to \$1,231 billion, compared to only \$944 million over the previous five years.

Those figures speak for themselves and, with the new approach I mentioned, Quebecers will benefit from the measures taken by this Government for generations to come.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the motion by the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon). However, considering the Member's well-known and well articulated views on economic matters, I find the wording of the Member's motion rather limp.

I would like to requote from the motion where he states in particular:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of increasing spending for regional development—

I would suggest that the House would be prepared to consider a much stronger motion than this one, particularly in light of the views which all Members of this House constantly express on the advisability of regional development and enhanced continuation of our commitment for regional development which goes back throughout our history.

I would like to suggest to the Hon. Member that perhaps his motion might be better expressed as follows: Not only should the Government consider the advisability of increasing spending for regional development, but it should make a firm commitment to regional development, and that increased funding for regional development should be the expression of that increased commitment.

I would just like to say that the Government's recent activity gives lie to the rhetoric we constantly hear from that side of the House about how important it considers regional development and how to could be trusted to maintain the expenditures on regional development that we have experienced in the past. We have seen in the last Budget and we have seen again in statements how false that commitment is.

• (1730)

I would like to highlight a few instances of this, particularly as they occur in Atlantic Canada and Nova Scotia. We have heard a great deal about the fact that the Economic Regional Development Agreements have not been renewed and have been allowed to lapse. However, it is worse than that. In some cases, and I speak in particular of one in my riding involving the Strait of Canso Development Agreement, not only have they not been renewed, but the federal spending does not even come close to what has been projected. I have read in the Estimates that the cumulative expenditure to March 31, 1988, which was to have been the expiry date of the agreement, was \$7,511,000 when in fact the maximum federal share under the agreement was \$19,600,000. Why has that money not been spent? I can think of all types of projects in my constituency that would have benefited from such an increase in federal spending, projects in infrastructure and in industrial development, projects in an area where unemployment is much higher than the national average.

Not only must the Government renew its commitment to regional development, it must re-establish its commitment to it. It must demonstrate to the House through tangible means, through some expression that we can see in terms of a commitment of funds to regional development, particularly in Atlantic Canada, that it is serious about this. What we have seen in the Budget, in the Estimates, and what we continue to see is that the Government preaches regional development and expresses the advisability of increasing spending on it and then does the reverse. I expect a motion with more teeth in it from a Member of the Hon. Member's calibre. I do not know if it is appropriate to amend the motion at this time. However, I would like to recognize that the motion should not only stress the advisability of increased spending for regional development but it should request on behalf of the House a tangible commitment to regional development in terms of increased funding earmarked for that purpose.

I would like to mention another area, which is not an ERDA but which has a different acronym. It is FRDA. FRDA is not a new kind of Canadian tree but an acronym for Forestry Development Renewal Agreement. I would like to direct the attention of the House to the fact that in the Estimates the FRDA in Nova Scotia has been allowed to collapse, as far as I can tell. There does not seem to be any commitment toward this agreement in the future in terms of spending. The forecast expenditure to March 31, 1989 for the Canada-Nova Scotia Forestry Renewal Agreement is \$49,569,000. Yet the Estimates project only \$794,000 for