

● (1640)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there questions or comments?

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the motion before the House which condemns the Government for abandoning its commitment to alleviate regional economic disparities. I must say that I agree with that assertion because when the Government consolidated its programs and brought in new legislation with regard to regional economic expansion, it reduced the amount of money which went into Manitoba, particularly into northern Manitoba. In that process, the Government attempted to increase its visibility in the passing out of public dollars in the northern part of the province. At least, it appeared to be a political approach to economic development rather than an approach which really attempted to meet the basic human needs of the people.

In fact, during the last provincial election, rumours were rife throughout Manitoba that if one wanted money from the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, one had to go to the local Liberal Indian chief. It took many dedicated individuals to sweep away this notion of patronage, to point out that it would not work and that a government could not be elected on that basis.

People are far too sophisticated. They want programs and policies which deal with their social and economic problems. The motion we are discussing deals with the Atlantic provinces. However, coming from the Province of Manitoba, I feel akin to the people in Atlantic Canada, particularly their need for help. The inner cities of western Canada are most in need of help. If there is one thing the federal Government could do which would be important in terms of regional development throughout western Canada, it would be to make funds available for development in core areas like Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon.

There is a program in Winnipeg known as the core area initiative program that will come to an end within a couple of years. It came about as a result of a great deal of pressure by local citizens upon the publicly-visible sitting Liberal member in Manitoba. It is important that government, of whatever stripe, begin to plan today to provide funds for the programs that were started under the core initiative program in Winnipeg. The people involved in these programs have started daycare centres, affirmative action training programs, as well as housing programs. The fundamental problem is one of resources. This is what regional economic development is all about. People, particularly poor ones, will be left hanging out to dry unless government plans where the money will come from to keep such programs going. These programs contribute to social justice in the country.

I call upon the Government to renew its commitment to regional development, particularly to make a commitment to the inner cities of Canada, so that people who are left out of the sharing of the wealth of this nation will receive justice, their children will be able to attend decent schools and they will have a future. The Government must ensure that old

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people living in inner cities have decent police protection, decent housing and grocery stores to which they can walk. The Government should do something significant and real in terms of regional economic expansion in the Atlantic provinces as well as in the inner cities across the country, particularly western Canadian cities.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments?

**Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to participate in this debate because it affects both your area and mine. I compliment the Hon. Member for Hillsborough (Mr. McMillan) for initiating debate on a subject which requires a great deal of exposure at this point in time.

One reason for suggesting that is that recently the seven aspiring Liberal leadership candidates attended a policy forum in Halifax. One would almost have thought that that forum took place on the moon, as far as any particular discussion of problems in Atlantic Canada were concerned. They just did not seem to know where they were. One of the major complaints of their supporters or possible supporters in Halifax was the fact that the problems of the Atlantic provinces did not seem to be the problems of the Liberal leadership candidates. They preferred to discuss national policies rather than regional ones. I would have thought that policy conferences across the country would relate to regional problems facing the country. If not, why not have all policy sessions in Ottawa rather than travel across the country to discuss national policies?

I would have liked to have heard some discussion by those leadership aspirants as to what will happen to FIRA. FIRA has been a curse for Atlantic Canada. It has prevented many potential industries from coming to our area. For example, within the last six months in my constituency because of the regulations of FIRA, a potential employer in our blueberry industry was lost. That industry has become a very substantial one, not because of the initiatives of this Government but because of the initiatives of provincial governments in that area. It is a big dollar earner outside of Canada and is of benefit to Canadians. However, there was no significant discussion about FIRA or about the need to have money invested in industry. Where the money happens to come from is not really important, as long as the companies which come to Canada become corporate citizens of this nation and adhere to our rules and regulations.

As a result of the system which is in place at the moment, many potential investors in this country turn away without examining the situation because of substantial delays in the processing of applications. It is somewhat better than it was for a period of time, but FIRA is a major disability in terms of the attraction of industry to Atlantic Canada. As far as I am concerned, its involvement in the location of industry should be substantially reduced. Provincial governments should determine whether or not an industry will be a positive benefit or a detriment to a given province. They rather than the federal