



PRESS RELEASE

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Regional Assistance

“MINISTER BLACKBURN IS TAKING WITH ONE HAND AND GIVING WITH THE OTHER”

- Jean-Yves Roy

Ottawa, Tuesday, September 26, 2006 – “The supposedly new economic support program for low-income regions and communities in Quebec will do nothing to help the communities in question because the program provides no new money. In fact, Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn’s manoeuvre is designed to do nothing more than give his government a little visibility, because all he has done is to take money out of existing programs, put it in a different envelope and give it a new name,” said the Bloc Québécois critic for Regional Development and MP for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, **Jean-Yves Roy**.

The Bloc Québécois MP explained that Minister Blackburn did not have to go very far to uncover the funding needed for his *Community Economic Diversity Initiative (CEDI) - Vitality* program. The \$85 million over four years for this fund comes essentially from two programs that were abolished by his government, that is, *Fishing Community CEDI*, a program for communities affected by the crisis in the fisheries sector, and *CEDI-Coulombe Report*, a program for communities dependent on the forestry industry. The rest of the money is taken from the *Strategic Regional Initiatives* Program.

“The abolition of the *CEDI-Coulombe Report* program alone provided almost half of the supposedly new program announced by Minister Blackburn, since barely \$9.6 of the some \$50 million from that envelope was spent last year,” **Mr. Roy** pointed out.

“We are a long way from the “Marshall Plan” that Jean-Pierre Blackburn promised us during the last election campaign. The minister simply moved the money into a program that he gave a new name, but whose objectives are largely similar to those of its predecessors. It remains to be seen whether the eligibility rules have been relaxed in order to serve the populations in a rational fashion this time,” **Mr. Roy** continued.

No guarantee for the coastal communities

My colleague the Bloc Québécois Critic for Fisheries and Oceans and MP for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, **Raynald Blais**, is particularly concerned about the coastal communities that depend largely on the fishing industry will have to these funds. “The former program at least had the advantage of clearly earmarking an envelope for the coastal communities, while the new program contains no guarantee. But we know perfectly well that the coastal communities are among those currently most in need of assistance,” **Mr. Blais** concluded.

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