

Government Orders

These are just two examples of problems facing the youth in our country today. What is perhaps of greater concern is that this problem of youth unemployment is occurring at a time when there are as many as 400,000 jobs available in our economy.

John Yurxa of Yurxa Research stated in a recent speech in Edmonton that "the economy will have no shortage of lucrative jobs in the remainder of this decade, it is just that you will need a new set of skills to get them. The fact is there are now over one and a half million Canadians out of work, yet many employers say they cannot find the workers they need. In fact, today, the mismatch between job seekers and job vacancies is so high that if it could be remedied overnight, up to 400,000 jobs would be created instantly".

It would seem the problem of youth unemployment can be found in the structural unemployment that is present in the Canadian economy. The solution to this problem lies in matching the training of our youth to the demands of the marketplace.

The recent budget included in its job creation an entire section devoted to apprenticeship programs for the training of youth. This apprenticeship program is to be introduced in 1995-96 and will cost the Canadian taxpayers \$96 million in the first year and an additional \$192 million in the following year. While I applaud the government for recognizing the problem of youth unemployment, some serious questions as to the structure of this program must be asked.

• (1125)

How did the government come up with these figures? Why \$96 million? Why not \$50 million or \$150 million? Will these programs meet the needs of the mismatch between job training and job requirements? Who will be eligible for these programs? Where and under whose auspices will these programs be delivered?

As mentioned earlier, I agree with the government's decision to initiate the youth initiative program. However, if it is to offer real hope to our youth it must be tailored to the needs of the market. Another program that does not offer real prospects for employment will only add to the frustration of our youth.

I suggest the government take the following into consideration in developing the youth initiative program. First, identify through co-operation with industry, labour and the provinces those skills that are actually needed in present and future markets.

Employment growth in the Canadian economy in recent years has been in services. Throughout the eighties, however, more than 90 per cent of occupations covered by apprenticeship programs have related to manufacturing and construction. Most

vacancies now exist in informational technology, telecommunications and environmental technologies.

My second suggestion is that industry participate, not only in setting the standards but also in the financial responsibility for these programs. Here we can look at two existing programs as models: One, the very positive aspects of the Canadian provincial apprenticeship programs already in existence; and two, the programs of other countries, particularly in Germany.

A third suggestion is that like trade apprenticeship programs, the youth initiative program should include some sort of credential on completion. This accreditation should be nationally recognized in order to ensure mobility from one province to another. This would allow for the free movement of workers to areas experiencing economic growth. This suggestion may be criticized by some who believe that apprenticeship programs are essentially a provincial responsibility. While this is mainly true, the provinces have already in place interprovincial standards under their red seal program which in Alberta covers approximately 90 per cent of the certified journeymen.

A final suggestion for the youth initiative program is that it must be focused on areas that do not jeopardize existing employees. To simply train our youth to replace at a lower wage present workers would only increase conflicts within the workforce.

It is estimated that 60 per cent of youth go directly from high school to the job market. Our experience shows a high school education, while necessary, will not be sufficient for the market demands of the future. The youth initiative program if done properly offers an opportunity and hope for our nation's youth. However, if done improperly it will be seen as a short term, quick fix government program and a waste of Canadian taxpayers' money.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's comments, particularly the positive light he puts on youth initiatives for employment.

The member posed a question: Why \$96 million in the first year? Why not \$50 million or \$150 million? I could say that we could probably do a lot better than \$96 million because the need is much greater. The reality is that we are trying to balance need and financial conditions. However I welcome his comments because I found them to be positive. I welcome his balanced approach, which is very refreshing to hear from that side of the House.

• (1130)

Mr. Hanrahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. He correctly points out—and we are consistently pointing it out to the Canadian people—that while a balanced budget is a necessity it must be done in a way that is prioritized.