

country. I know of his work in Manitoba before he came to this place. It preceded him, and I congratulate him.

We cannot stress enough the importance of promoting advanced education in this country, nor should we underestimate the valuable, indeed vital, contributions that international students can make to the Canadian university system, the national economy and the multi-national character of the country.

The government recognizes that Canada must excel in education. It is critical to our social and economic health not just today but particularly to ensure prosperity in the next century. It is for precisely this reason that Canada ratified the UNESCO Convention on recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees concerning higher education in March of this year.

Our motivation for adopting this accord was not simply materialistic or altruistic. It is because we realize that despite the diversity of languages or the differences in economic and social systems from our world neighbours, we have a common responsibility to strengthen our educational ties in the interest of world peace and co-operation.

The intention of the UNESCO Convention is to enable each country to exploit its educational means as effectively as possible, to constantly improve curricula, to ensure that teachers, students, research and professional workers have greater international mobility and to alleviate the difficulties encountered by individuals when they return from abroad after studying, or from training.

In the short time since Canada ratified the UNESCO agreement, it has moved to establish the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, the centre to which the hon. member for St. Boniface alluded. This centre will oversee implementation of the convention, and it is expected to be operational by the end of this fiscal year.

At this point, I would like to address the motion and the initiatives that are ongoing through the centre. A great deal of discussion and consultation have already taken place. Representatives from the provinces and the federal government have arrived at a number of recommendations which have been adopted by the ministers to become the foundation of the centre's mandate.

Private Members' Business

I think it is important that we reiterate once again those responsibilities of the centre: to co-ordinate the collection and dissemination of information of academic and professional recognition of foreign qualifications from Canada in international sources; to identify and document existing resources and establish an international network; to provide informational services on qualifications held by individuals educated abroad; to promote international mobility of students by providing them with pertinent information or referring their request to appropriate agencies; and to make available to foreign countries, international organizations and individuals information on the Canadian education system and to take steps in conjunction with the Department of External Affairs to promote recognition of Canada's credentials abroad.

I want to stress that it is a two-way street. Canadian students wishing to study abroad stand to gain as much from the signing of this convention as international students wishing to come here.

This new centre will act as a central clearing house smoothing out the wrinkles that hampered both our domestic and foreign students in the past. It will not, however, presume to assume authority or control over areas outside its jurisdiction.

Education remains a provincial responsibility. That is why the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials will be jointly operated by Canada and the provinces. Let me also make it clear that the centre will not have any regulatory powers. It will act strictly in an advisory capacity. Colleges, universities, provincial and professional regulatory bodies will continue to be autonomous.

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In addition to the government officials, the information centre will have representation from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, and observer status has been granted to the Association of Registrars of the universities and colleges of Canada. It will also receive support from the technical working groups with expertise in areas essential to the centre's success. It is these professionals and specialists who are best equipped to decide what needs to be done and how to go about doing it.