

Government Orders

would be an identified contribution from the provincial level and that the level of contributions to post-secondary education would not continue to erode as it has been doing since the beginning of this decade.

I want to make clear that erosion is one that did not begin with this government. In fact it began with the changes made in the legislation by the previous government beginning in 1977. Most notably were the 6 and 5 cutbacks in 1982 and 1983 which cost a considerable amount of money to the system.

Looking at the \$9 billion it was costing the system by the changes made by the present government and adding to that the \$2 billion which was taken away from EPF in cutbacks by the Liberal government, there has been a net decrease of some \$11 billion in the expected contributions for post-secondary education that we should have expected from this government. This has to be looked at in the context of what the government has identified as its prosperity agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you will recall because I know you were as enthusiastic about that announcement then as you are now, that the federal government had promised that it would quadruple the number of trainees that were produced in this country so that at least we would meet the level of training in industry that is achieved in the United States, which falls considerably short of the levels achieved in Europe and more specifically in Germany.

It announced the rather ambitious goal of doubling the number of scientists, engineers and mathematicians. It promised that it would eliminate the 20 per cent functional illiteracy rate that we have in this country. It said, and we lauded this recommendation, that we would achieve a 90 per cent graduation rate from high schools.

Looking at this present budget and looking at this legislation we see and have seen that it is a continuation of a policy which has been completely contradictory to its promises.

We were ready to forgive this government for its failures up until the 1992-93 fiscal year if it had shown the slightest evidence that it was going to truly commit itself to those educational and training elements that were the bedrock we were told, or at least it was suggested to us, of the government's prosperity agenda.

New Democrats have considerable problems with some of the right-wing ideological pap that goes into the federal government's prosperity agenda. But we do understand that if we are going to have a value-added economy of the sort that is going to permit Canadians to go to work and which will create wealth, that wealth will only be generated on the basis that we create opportunities for all of our citizens through training and education, through the development of skills.

When we get right down to it, if any wealth is going to be created, it is created from the minds and the creativity and the capacity for innovation that Canadians have in great abundance if they are given the opportunity to do this.

Whether we are looking at EPF or whether we are looking at the over-all training budget, the government has cut \$200 million from the training program under the Canadian Jobs Strategy. We have to understand that that relates to young people who are not working and who are largely not working because they do not have the skills to work.

It purports to be a government that understands the significance of training and education. Since it has been in office there has been a sharp erosion of the over-all expenditures by this government for training and education.

We find that there has been a decrease. The figures are right here. Since 1986-87 until 1991 the over-all increase in the cost of living has been 25.5 per cent, but we find that for education and training over-all government contributions have only risen 6.5 per cent. That is scandalous on the face of it.

• (1640)

What is more important is that it is tragic in its very fundamentals in what it is doing to our nation in its capacity to create the wealth that will allow our citizens to prosper.

This government has the notion that you have to somehow have the wealth and then you will have adequate social programs, when in fact if you do not have adequate social programs, you have not a chance in this world of creating wealth. The key social program in that context obviously is training and education.