

Speech From the Throne

year for a household of four. And a larger home market would allow more Canadian companies to achieve the size and competitive edge to launch themselves successfully into world markets.

Today, investment and technology flow with ease across international boundaries, markets for goods and services are specialized and decisions on production are made on a world-wide basis. In the interdependent world we live in, prosperity is more and more a factor of knowledge, skills and innovation. The nations and firms that are succeeding and will continue to succeed in this environment are those whose people are educated, productive and able to adjust to rapidly changing circumstances. The risk for Canada is not so much to be undercut by developing countries with low-wage economies but to be outperformed by technologically advanced countries with highly paid, highly skilled workers.

Increasing our productivity across the full range of Canadian industry—resources, and services—is the only way to secure and enhance our prosperity over the longer term. Productivity is the difference between prosperity and decline. The prosperity of all Canadians and our ability to maintain social programs depend on the productivity of Canadians. Increasing productivity requires the collaborative efforts of governments, business, labour and individual Canadians, in all regions. To focus this effort, specific targets will be set.

Canadian business, workers and governments will be asked to work together to generate at least two and a half million new jobs by the year 2000 and to raise the real incomes of Canadians by at least twenty-five percent, by the same year. These targets are realistic and achievable in a united Canada, whose population will approach thirty million people by the end of the century and whose gross domestic product will approach one trillion dollars.

My government believes that building Canadian prosperity and securing Canada's natural environment are fully compatible goals. International experience demonstrates conclusively that the most economically prosperous nations are also the most environmentally conscious nations. To safeguard our natural heritage, my government introduced this country's first comprehensive environment plan—the Green Plan—during the last session.

Over the coming months my Minister of the Environment will be implementing a wide range of Green Plan initiatives. These initiatives, in concert with action on the part of the provinces and the private sector, will ensure that Canadians, today and tomorrow, have the clean air, water and land essential to sustaining human health and enhancing our quality of life. They will also encourage the development of "environmentally friendly" products for which there are growing markets abroad.

We must, all of us, come to grips with the fundamental issues involved in integrating environmental and economic considerations into our decision-making. My government will, over the coming months, consult with provincial governments, industry and environmental leaders to explore means of complementing current regulatory approaches with innovative instruments that would

achieve positive environmental results without prejudicing economic prosperity.

Increasing economic prosperity is first and foremost an issue of people. Canada's ability to prosper in a global economy will be determined by the level of Canadians' educational achievement, by the sophistication of our management skills and by our attitudes to work and to change. In the dawning knowledge age, how well we live will depend on how well we learn.

Canadian men and women must have access to both the skills and the lifelong learning opportunities necessary to improve their job prospects and ensure their own prosperity. But Canadians are questioning whether this country's approach to learning, despite the great dedication of so many talented educators and administrators, is adequate for the times.

The issue is not exclusively, or even primarily, money. Canada already spends more money per capita on education than almost any other industrialized nation does. Every year the federal government alone spends about eleven billion dollars, directly and indirectly, on education and training. The issue is results.

—Three out of ten students drop-out of high school before graduating.

—Four out of ten adults cannot read or do math well enough to perform everyday tasks.

—Canadian industry spends less than half as much on training its employees as American industry does, a fifth as much as the Japanese and an eighth as much as the Germans.

This is not the kind of performance that will guarantee increasing prosperity for our children; in fact, it has given rise to concerns whether the next generation of Canadian men and women will be the first to have a lower standard of living than their parents.

The time has come to reach a national consensus on performance, goals, partnerships and priorities for learning. As part of my government's new agenda for prosperity, a discussion paper on learning will be published to stimulate and focus discussion on education and training.

My government recognizes that education is a provincial responsibility under the constitution and respects that fact. My government also recognizes that Canadians are concerned about education, and would like to see Canada-wide goals established, with provincial endorsement and cooperation, for the year 2000. These goals could include:

—cutting illiteracy rates in half;

—ensuring that ninety percent of Canadians attain high school diplomas or the equivalent by age twenty-five;

—doubling the number of post-secondary graduates in mathematics, the sciences and engineering; and

—quadrupling the training provided by employers to their employees.