Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, This is perhaps one of the most important resolutions to be put before this House this year, because it deals with not only the recession that we are facing due to the government's policy, but the actual deindustrialization of our nation. There is no area of the country more affected by this deindustrialization than the province of Ontario.

Clearly, the important groups right across the country have talked in terms of 229,000 manufacturing jobs lost as a result of free trade and the government's policy. We do not say that all of these jobs are lost because of the free trade deal itself, but because of the general economic policy of the country.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada has taken it upon himself to decide that Canada's inflation rate is going to be zero, or 2 per cent. Surely the industrial policy of the Government of Canada should not be decided solely by the Governor of the Bank of Canada. Clearly the government's economic policy, its monetary policy, its fiscal policy and the free trade agreement, during the period since 1989 when it came into effect, have resulted in the most drastic and dramatic loss of jobs of any period in our history.

Members of our caucus from northern Ontario had a series of hearings throughout northern Ontario in the past couple of weeks. We heard from groups all over the north from some eight different communities during a five-day period in which they talked about the absolute ravaging of the manufacturing industry for softwood lumber. That is all part of the free trade deal.

The imposition of an export tax of 15 per cent is bad enough, but when the dollar rose from 74 cents—whatever it was—in 1986 to 87 cents in this past couple of years, the impact is not a reduction of 15 per cent but one of 30 per cent.

A report arrived just today on members' desks which outlined the levels of the export tax which have been imposed on this industry during the past year. I believe the figure is something like $18 million in the province of Ontario alone.

Its impact is that practically every part of the softwood manufacturing industry in northern Ontario is either shut down today or is on very slow turns of work. That area has been deindustrialized. One of the largest producers, the Buchanan group in Thunder Bay which has 3,200 forest products workers of the 6,000 in the softwood lumber section, told us that if many of these plants do not reopen by April, they will never reopen. They are one of the largest manufacturers. We see how that whole area has been ravaged.

As well, I want to talk about the mining industry and how the government has effectively removed all its support programs for exploration and development so that we see communities like Elliot Lake or Timiskaming which have lost several thousand jobs in the last two years. There will be no new mines coming on stream in the years ahead because there is no exploration and development taking place in those areas of northeastern Ontario.

The numbers involved are very large. We are talking about 15 per cent of all the mining jobs that have been lost in the last two years in northeastern Ontario and northwestern Quebec, something approaching 4,000 at least.

I was very concerned in the budget because the government has cut back by some $100 million in the new training budget at a time when literally tens of thousands of Canadians are being laid off from industries that have been obliterated or destroyed by the free trade deal.

What we need to be doing is retraining those workers to take on new jobs, new tasks and new opportunities. In my own community of Elliot Lake, we lost some 2,250 direct mining jobs last summer and probably another 1,500 or 2,000 in the service sector.

At the present time, we have 500 people on UIC benefits. We have another 700 on training, either pre-vocation or vocational kinds of training. Last week, we were notified that we would have another 1,000 people laid off this Friday for a six-week period, to be repeated again by a seven-week period this summer with 400 being permanently laid off.

We are talking of an industry losing some 3,300 jobs against a total workforce of 3,900 a year ago or 80 per cent. This for a community of 13,000 or 14,000 is simply a desperation situation. It is desperate.

I ask the minister today if she can give a commitment that the payments would be made within a couple of weeks of when people qualified for the UI, because they are being told by their UIC office in Elliot Lake that they have got to wait a minimum of six, seven or eight weeks.