

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: When the House took recess at six o'clock, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert (Mr. Dawson) had the floor.

Mr. Dawson: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out this afternoon just before recess, when we talk of industrial strategy, it is important that we never forget the question of energy and particularly, because of the area I am concerned with, individuals, or, in other words, manpower training.

[English]

An additional \$10 million will be provided this fiscal year for training our native people in both urban and more remote settings. This will enable them to take advantage of the immense opportunities that will be generated by our industrial and energy developments. We are now working with representatives of native organizations to see how these funds can best be used to create the job potential of native people, and, more than incidentally, help to provide the skills which will be required by western energy and industrial expansion.

To help counter the serious underrepresentation of women in many male dominated occupations, the government has developed an initiative which has stirred the interest of manpower authorities in other parts of the world. Some \$2 million has been added to our normal industrial training program budget for this fiscal year to provide employers with an experimental 75 per cent premium to train women in skills and trades in which they represent less than one-tenth of the labour force. We hope that this assistance will induce employers to train up to 3,700 women this year in occupations in which women have traditionally been underrepresented. The program will be expanded next year if it is successful.

These initiatives in the training area—to increase the proportion of our training which takes place in an industrial setting, to increase directly and sharply the provision of high level skills through training, to ensure that our native people can benefit from opportunities, and to begin to right the under-representation of women in important and growing skill areas—are key steps which will serve us well through the 1980s. I wish to emphasize, however, that they are not being carried out in isolation. Important discussions have been held with representatives of some of our most dynamic industrial sectors, the aerospace industry, the petroleum-related industries, etc.

The enhanced revitalized training to which the government is committed cannot take place without the co-operation and drive of the business sector. A skill training strategy which helps industry do necessary training must be and is being carried out with the active collaboration of our key industrial sectors. That collaboration, of course, is a two-way street.

For many years substantial segments of Canadian industry have relied on their ability to attract skilled immigrants from abroad rather than taking the steps necessary to train and develop our own young people and women to meet industrial skill needs. In recent years it has become apparent that such a strategy, even if it were desirable, can no longer work.

Economic Development

Canada's expanding sectors and skill needs are frequently the same as those in other parts of the industrialized world. Rapid rates of productivity and real income growth abroad have brought standards of wages and living in many countries into the same range that we enjoy in Canada and the United States. Increasingly it is simply not possible to attract from abroad the skills that industry needs for the future.

We, and many expanding industrial sectors in Canada, face a dilemma. The types of skills which are most in shortage frequently take 3, 4, or even 5 years to produce. They must be planned for, and the investment in human resources made, long in advance of when they are needed. It is not possible or even realistic to suggest to firms that they should go without needed foreign skills now and wait for four years until they can properly train their own necessary workers.

The basic policy which has been adopted is not to deny firms the opportunity to recruit high skills abroad, but rather to ensure that firms which do seek to attract skilled people from abroad are also doing their fair share of training Canadians to meet future needs. We are, increasingly, asking firms to outline their future manpower plans and to demonstrate the adequacy of their investment in training as prerequisites to the recruitment of already trained persons from abroad. The result is that if the firm can attract persons in skill-short areas from abroad, it immediately gets what it needs, but it also makes provision to train unemployed or underemployed Canadians to fill whatever the future requirements may be.

● (2010)

I might add that, despite our need for skills, our growth is not always even. In a number of important technological areas the ability of Canadian post-secondary institutions to produce technically qualified people is, at least temporarily, running ahead of the ability of the private sector to utilize them. The new technology employment program is designed to fill that gap, by assisting private sector and non-profit research institutes to hire unemployed or underemployed recent technically qualified graduates in priority areas of endeavour. Through this program we expect to enable young Canadians to utilize the existing technological abilities they have developed and to further technological development and the application of technology. Among the priority areas for this program are micro-electronics, biotechnology, communications technology, etc.

Training and development of Canadians is critical to our future industrial role and expansion but so is the ability to adjust to the changes which will be generated. Those changes will be considerable and far-reaching in their consequences.

We know that energy and related developments in western Canada will result in differentially rapid employment growth and rapidly-escalating skill needs in that area. We know that the altered pattern of growth between our industrial sectors will result in major changes in the level of opportunity which each can offer. And we know that those changes will not affect all Canadians equally. We know, further, that a wise and forward-looking society does not tolerate progress for some at the expense of others. Our employment and training and