

We all have to work smarter and look for innovations to get people back to work, to keep people working, to provide the training that is needed and to ensure that as people go through transition after transition they have the skills to move forward. We are told that in this day and age, anyone graduating from high school or university can assume that they will have at least three careers during the course of their working days, and they are not necessarily related careers.

At the outset of my remarks I made reference to the loss of jobs in Thunder Bay in the pulp and paper industry. One mill closed entirely and its total work force is out on the streets. Another mill chopped about 400 jobs. In working with the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Canadian Jobs Strategy, training packages were developed. We now have men who came out of high school, got a job at the mill and worked there for 20 years. They are back at community college and are taking a broad range of careers. For them they are atypical careers.

Imagine someone going from being a paper maker to a nurse, or someone who operated a fork-lift learning computerization. All those things are possible and all we need are the tools to do them. If you cut off the transfers that provide support to people when they are unable to work, then you are cutting at the very foundation of their psyche, of their ability to get back on their feet, find a new option and new ways of doing things.

I think the federal government would be much better off looking for new innovations in that way, and not reducing the transfer payments to B.C., Alberta and Ontario. It has to find a better way. It has chosen to cut instead of allocating resources in a much wiser and more effective fashion.

I want to give you one suggestion, Mr. Speaker. There is a section in the Income Tax Act that allows people to defer their incomes. Teachers use it at the elementary and high school levels, instructors at the community colleges in Ontario use it and the federal public servants use it. In some cases it is called "four over five".

You sign up for the program with your employer and defer one fifth of your annual gross income into a special account. In the fifth year, you leave your place of employment for a year. Some people take training to upgrade and are paid throughout. Some people travel.

Government Orders

Some people get into new occupations or activities to develop their minds, and come back refreshed. All sorts of options are opened.

What it also does, assuming the employer is concerned about creating employment, is create one full-time replacement job over five years for every five people in an operation who participate. That is available to every sector in this country. It has been in the Income Tax Act I believe for at least 15 years, if not longer, but very few sectors have used it.

• (1630)

I want to go one step farther. If we want to deal with the unemployment problem, which in part is responsible for the kind of mushrooming welfare situation we have not just in Ontario but right across the country, we have got to find ways to get people back to work. One of the ways to do that is to provide either interest-free or low interest loans through companies that agree to participate, provided they replace the workers.

What I am suggesting is that this coming year a number of people could take their year off for retraining, to relax, to recharge the batteries, to volunteer at a local hospital or whatever. Then over the next four years, they would repay that income. We just reverse the process a bit. This would allow the creation of some new positions now when we need them, because we have a lot of people out there with a lot of valuable skills that are going to waste.

There obviously has to be some recognition that peoples' incomes will drop, but I am told the experience in the education sector is that when you take off the taxable component, the loss of net income is marginal. At the same time, in the treasury of Canada, Ontario or any of the provinces, by having one more person for every five working in the work force paying income tax, not collecting UI, not collecting welfare, you will have a net gain to the treasury without the kind of investment needed to create a plan; millions and millions of dollars, whether it is in the deferred taxes for large corporations which reinvest in capital equipment, or the megaprojects or what have you. That is the kind of smarter thinking we need.

I am not going to take credit for this idea. It came to me from one of my constituents who came to one of my working sessions on the economy. It is one of many