

*Private Members' Business*

No review of employment measures would be complete without considering the measures taken by the government to ensure that the training and employment benefits of claims settlements are enjoyed by claims beneficiaries. Subagreements in each agreement in principle pave the way for concrete steps to ensure training and employment opportunities are marketed aggressively to the beneficiaries, ensuring that the opportunities created by the settlements flow to the claimants.

This kind of collaborative economic development programming is important because of its multi-faceted approach and the fact that it recognizes that the role of the federal government is to support, to the extent possible, the decisions and goals that northerners make and set to themselves.

These are important initiatives. They clearly and amply illustrate the role this government is playing in assisting the employment of aboriginal youth in the north. The future belongs to the youth and we are ensuring they are equipped to meet the challenges of new opportunities and to carry future generations forward along the same self-sufficient path.

**Mr. Pat Sobeski (Cambridge):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion before the House.

This motion focuses on the employment, economic and health needs of Canada's aboriginal youth. While these matters are of profound importance, they are also clearly more than just another excuse for partisan debate.

The fundamental problems and concerns involved are hardly new. What is new, however, is the determination and clear direction which this government has demonstrated in addressing these problems and concerns which have had their origins in the earliest days of settlement in this land.

I will not attempt to address all of the issues contained in this motion. In the next few moments, however, I would like to deal with the matters of economic prospects and opportunities for aboriginal youth in Canada. Many approaches have been tried and much serious effort has been made by previous federal governments to address the legitimate and pressing concerns of Canada's

aboriginal peoples in general and aboriginal youth in particular.

Why then are we here today debating the same issues and the same concerns which have been the subject of such vigorous efforts in the past? At least part of the answer lies in the complexity of the issues themselves.

Yet another important part of the answer lies in the realization that only a long-term commitment to the achievement of self-reliance and self-sufficiency by Canada's aboriginal people will help to build the basis for genuine and lasting economic and social progress.

How exactly is that progress defined? It is defined in terms of achieving real increases in average income levels and employment rates. It is defined in terms of an expanded and flourishing business base, a better trained and more mobile aboriginal labour force, and a stronger aboriginal management and entrepreneurial capacity. It is defined in this government's Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, announced in June of last year.

I would hope that the majority of hon. members are already well acquainted with the details of this strategy. Unlike previous aboriginal economic development programs, which were limited by deliberate sunset provisions, this strategy will be on a continuing basis.

Supporting this process is a minimum federal government commitment of close to \$873 million for the first five years of the strategy. This strategy brings together aboriginal business and community leaders, provincial and territorial governments, and the Canadian business community in a new national partnership. It is a partnership designed to bring aboriginal people to a new level of economic self-reliance with the means to effectively manage their own business enterprises, economic institutions and their own job training and skills development.

Just as the orientation for this strategy is long term, its development did not come overnight. Two years of intensive consultation were undertaken, involving a number of federal departments and representatives of aboriginal people from across Canada. The result is an integrated approach.

This strategy takes into account developmental training, management and ongoing project-support requirements. It offers substantial new opportunities for aboriginal individuals and communities to develop and