

Private Members' Business

their percentage of the population, aboriginal Canadians are under-represented in the workplace in virtually every sector of the Canadian economy.

While the problems are very clear, their resolution is not. This government is aware that a long term commitment is necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of self-reliance and self-sufficiency for Canada's aboriginal people.

Nowhere is the problem more complex than in the north, where there are limited wage-earning opportunities over all, and relatively few employment opportunities for unskilled workers. More important, the Indian and Inuit population has a significantly lower level of education and skills. This is related to a number of factors, including cultural differences and difficulty of access to schooling.

Another factor of particular interest is the age structure of the Inuit population, which is markedly different from the rest of Canada. In 1981, the median age of the Inuit was 18, versus 30 for the Canadian population. In 1991, there will still be a 12 year gap between the median ages of both groups. The gap will widen in the longer term to a 15 year age difference in the year 2001—the median age for the Inuit will be 23 compared to 38 for all of Canada.

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This relative youthfulness of the Inuit population has important implications for government initiatives. While the Canadian population is aging into retirement and will be demanding increased social services such as geriatric health care and housing for the aged, the Inuit population is entering into the working-age groups and will need labour market oriented services such as training, employment opportunities and assistance for economic development.

I am aware that education is the best way to combat the social malaise and physical hardship that now afflict too many native Canadians. I also know that assistance for Indian post-secondary education is one of the most successful programs the federal government has ever undertaken. The issue of education is an important one that I would like to address in depth at another time.

At the moment, I would like to deal with the initiatives this government has undertaken to stimulate the training and employment opportunities so vital to the youth of the north.

The Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, announced last June, will provide long-term employment and business opportunities to Canada's aboriginal citizens, by giving them the means to manage effectively their own business enterprises, economic institutions, job training and skill development.

This strategy is a long term commitment by its very nature. While previous programs were limited by a sunset clause, this strategy will be on a continuing basis. It represents a government commitment of close to \$874 million for its first five years.

Throughout, we will be seeking assurances from aboriginal business and community leaders, provincial and territorial governments and the Canadian business community at large, that they will work together to bring Indian and Inuit people to a new level of economic self-reliance.

A skills development component of the program, to be delivered by Canada Employment and Immigration, will be of particular importance to Indian and Inuit youth in the north. It will provide and increase managerial, professional and vocational skills through training at community colleges, universities and other institutions.

This strategy is not a first by any means, but merely the latest in a series of programs this government has implemented to stimulate employment in the north and throughout Canada.

Over the past five years of Canada-Northwest Territories economic development agreements, \$29.6 million will have been spent promoting income and employment growth in the tourism, small business, mining, renewable resources and arts and crafts sectors of the economy.

Over the past five years, this government contributed the largest share of the \$21.7 million spent under Canada-Yukon economic development programming which, among other things, promoted the development of businesses maximizing employment and investment opportunities for Yukoners.