

Supply

I want to bring the hon. member to another way of looking at the situation and that is the education situation in general. We have a basic and fundamental problem with respect to education in this country, when at the high school level there is a 30 per cent drop-out rate. That represents about 100,000 high school students per year who drop out of school.

My hon. friend is sort of aiming at the post-secondary level, which is very important, there is no question about that, but before these students can get to the post-secondary level, they also have to go through high school. When there is a 30 per cent dropout situation in Canada right now, there is a fundamental problem, which is not just the federal government's problem, but it is a Canadian problem and deals with as much the provincial and/or other governments in Canada, that have their own responsibilities with respect to education.

As we have indicated many times before, we do not intend to infringe on provincial jurisdictions with respect to education. That being said, we have a problem with education. All governments and all interested parties have to get together and find a way to resolve this very crucial and important situation with respect to high school student dropouts. That is exactly what we are trying to do on the one hand with our stay in school initiative and also by opening the door to some very important discussions with the other responsible jurisdictions with respect to education in Canada so that we can find a solution and get to the root of the problem. It seems to be at the high school level where there is a 30 per cent dropout rate. Consequently, when those students do not drop out of school they will be in post-secondary education.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie Gibeau (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister who seems genuinely concerned with this issue that concerns us as well.

The minister said, in his remarks as well as in the Speech from the Throne, that economic prosperity is first and foremost an issue of people. I would like to ask the minister how his program, which includes a rather innovative strategy and which certainly provides important funds, since he referred to an amount of \$296 million, how this policy will be implemented or adapted to the education policies in Quebec? I would also like to ask the minister if he could elaborate on the criteria that will be used for the allocation of those funds?

Mr. Cadieux: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the

question asked by my honourable colleague. The problem to which she alludes is one which undoubtedly affects all the members of this House, and not only myself or the members that have spoken until now.

We are faced with a fundamental problem. In the Speech from the Throne, we referred, of course, to human resources and I think that my honourable colleague from the opposition has also emphasized, earlier, the fact that the lack of competitiveness, among other factors, is of course directly linked to the human resources available here in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that the 26 million Canadians that make up our relatively small population, compared to that of our neighbor, are, by and large, very resourceful. Given the proper tools, Canadians will continue to be competitive and to be able to compete with any country in the world. Indeed, we have the resources, as well as the resourcefulness that I just mentioned.

However, we must make sure that this resourcefulness of our human resources, notably our young people in school, is being promoted and supported. Mr. Speaker, when we are faced with a 30 per cent drop out rate, which amounts to 100 000 students dropping out in Canada, there is a fundamental problem which is not only a federal problem: It is a Canadian problem that all jurisdictions and interested parties must look at in order to find a solution at the first level, that is at the high school level.

• (1200)

So, Mr. Speaker, while all recognize education to be a fundamentally provincial responsibility, and while it is out of the question, for the federal government, to get involved in this field, we simply cannot ignore the problem.

So, our program is aimed at helping those young people stay in school, at analysing their situation, supporting them, and providing the tools that they need to stay in school, because dropping out is not the solution. It may be a popular solution in the short term and in the eyes of other dropouts, Mr. Speaker, but once again experience has thought us that dropping out is not a long term solution. People who drop out not only find it increasingly difficult, as the years go by, to find work: It also becomes harder for them to keep a job because technology improves and the world evolves, which makes it all the more difficult for the dropout to catch up.