

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

Hon. Members need assurance that Canadian men and women are not being left behind, that they are not slipping through our social security safety net as they go about building and adapting to post-industrial economic realities.

However, I would suggest to them, Mr. Speaker, that we are providing a greater service to everyone when we shift our energies from simple income maintenance schemes to training and retraining opportunities that will allow people to participate fully in a thriving economy. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that we can best ensure a strong and competitive future for our country through an investment in human capital, and that is what the channelling of more funds into skill development measures represents.

We cannot disregard the change that is taking place in our economy. We must recognize that complacency in a highly competitive world amounts to a prescription for disaster. We have always insisted, both inside this House and in public fora across the land, that it is folly to underestimate the demands of a constantly changing and interdependent global economy. Indeed, we have always maintained that the failure to preserve a competitive workforce would have dire consequences for Canada's economic prospects.

That is why we have dedicated more dollars to job training and skill enhancement than any government in the history of Canada. The changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act are part of the dedication to training people to take advantage of the opportunities that are at hand.

We have not merely focused our resources and attention on those Canadians blessed with the wit and wisdom to attend our institutions of higher learning. We have also devoted resources so that people faced with the dead-end prospects of welfare can see a way out of their unhappy condition. These are people who, given the right kind of retraining and re-entry assistance, can get back into the job market.

We all know of examples in our own communities, such as my riding of Okanagan Centre, of single mothers anxious to get back into the workforce; of young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have dropped out of school and now face a bleak and troublesome future; disabled people with obvious intelligence and ability who are held back by the prejudices of an unappreciative job market; visible minorities and native peoples who too often face major barriers in joining the

workforce. These are the groups that have been traditionally left by the economic wayside, but these are the people who need some timely and effective intervention to help them become part of the economic mainstream.

The training and retraining funds available through this strategy and in existing programs are designed to help overcome the barriers that exclude people from the labour market. Each of the many components of current programming has targeted groups such as women, social assistance recipients, aboriginal people, visible minorities and people with disabilities. These groups have been identified to ensure that they receive the relevant training that will give them a chance to become part of the permanent labour force.

We are dedicated to helping these target groups gain access to the labour market so they can fully participate in Canadian society. That is a major motivation behind the federal funding of the Canadian Jobs Strategy. We see it as an investment in our future. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if we merely give passive income support, without providing the prospect of joining the post-industrial economy, we are condemning people to remain on the outside of our social and economic system.

In order that Hon. Members appreciate our commitment to the development of a training ethic in Canada, I would like to outline some of the principal features of the Canadian Jobs Strategy. I will begin with the job entry component of CJS, a program that has served as an important means of getting people in our target groups back into the workforce. It provides, for example, on and off-the-job training and work experience for young people having difficulty making the critical transition from school to work.

Program co-ordinators under job entry have included businesses, public and educational institutions, municipal governments and Indian band councils. These co-ordinators are responsible for developing, designing and administering training plans that are designed to meet the specific needs of the job entry participants. They are responsible for identifying and recruiting the participants, selecting suitable training sites, monitoring the participants' progress and paying allowances to the participants.

However, the program is not exclusively designated for young people. The job re-entry component of the CJS has also been used to assist women who have difficulty making the transition from home to work outside the home. Both entry and re-entry provide training for those