

training with employment. And those are the realities of 1986, Mr. Speaker, and we are not alone in thinking this way. All Canadians are beginning to understand that this is what we must do to keep up with other countries.

• (1120)

[English]

Ten years ago, of course, it was widely believed that the labour market was stable. Long-term unemployment was rare, and short periods of unemployment were seen as the norm. They were usually associated with the ups and downs of the economy. Governments were not expected to be imaginative or to create new approaches. The recession of the early 1980s changed all of this. It forced us to confront the changing reality of the market-place. No longer could we sustain our faith in short-term job-creation projects and unemployment insurance as solutions. Unfortunately, the belief in this old approach to the problem has been a long time in dying.

[Translation]

I agree that unemployment insurance, and there are many good reasons for this, Mr. Speaker, must be maintained as a safety net for all Canadians, and I can assure you that will continue to be the case. However, only a growing and healthy economy and an employment policy that is based on co-operation with business will help us build a strong country, where these realities are understood.

[English]

The global economy is changing and this brings change to every Canadian home and factory, every store and office. It means that individual Canadians will be called upon to adapt and seize new opportunities throughout their lives. For some, the challenges are greater and this Government has responded and will continue to respond to assist first those with the greatest needs. Older workers, young people, women, the disabled, visible minorities and natives all have special needs and the Government is committed to removing obstacles to their full participation in the workforce.

The Canadian Jobs Strategy is designed to focus on individuals. We realize that the old ways are no longer adequate. A global, bureaucratic plan in Ottawa does not relate to the problems faced by an unemployed woman in Ontario, a laid off miner in Manitoba, or a Newfoundland fisherman. Canadians do not want the old make-work projects. They not only offered old solutions, they were wasteful and diminished the dignity and self-respect of the individual. Canadians deserve better.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Job Strategy offers much more. It offers the solutions of the eighties for the problems of the eighties. Practical training and job experience lead to permanent jobs. The strategy concentrates on what works across this country. It does not fall into the trap of short-term jobs, which are jobs in name only. And above all, it involves everyone:

employers, workers, training institutions and all levels of government.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the figures are there. Canadians have responded enthusiastically. On average, over 80,000 people are trying daily to acquire the requisite skills to fill permanent jobs.

[English]

In Prince Edward Island, for example, a woman with nine children, who had worked as a labourer and was subsequently injured, began a training program in retail sales. She was hired by a local employer before her training period had ended. In Newfoundland, fishermen who were laid off by a fish processing plant were able to develop new products with assistance provided by the Canadian Jobs Strategy. As a result, they were not laid off.

There are thousands and thousands of examples across this country of Canadians who have successfully participated in the Canadian Jobs Strategy and who are now contributing their talents to the labour force.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, my work as Minister of Employment and Immigration is to take advantage of that momentum and to work towards progress with all my colleagues in this House. We do not claim to have the answers to all our problems. A great many remain unsolved, we do not wield a magic wand, but we can see that the outlook is more promising than it was two years ago. Time has come—and I hope the message will get through, Mr. Speaker—to stop seeing dark clouds on the horizon, especially in the employment sector.

There has been notable improvement over the past two years and statistics are there to prove it. But Canadians must change their mentality, and this can only come about if, in turn, individuals and the community accept this responsibility. The Government can lend support for such initiatives, but the future of the labour force depends on concerted action.

Quite obviously we are aware of regional realities. For example, I know that training does not come easy in some of the smaller villages in my own riding because the link between the economic reality and any business is not immediately apparent, and the community is poor, something which can be said about many ridings throughout the country.

[English]

For this reason I applaud the creation of an Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and I look forward to the participation of my Department in this important initiative. I look forward also to meeting my provincial colleagues to discuss the situation in areas like the Atlantic provinces, northern Ontario, northern Quebec and other regions. I will listen carefully to their suggestions, particularly those regarding the Canadian Jobs Strategy. One thing is certain. We must evaluate the problems of particular regions carefully and we must integrate our efforts into the local economy.