

Private Members' Business

discussion with national organizations, communities and different sectors concerned with education and training. *Learn Well—Live Well* recognizes among other things that, in order to remain internationally competitive, Canada must enhance knowledge and have an environment where millions of Canadians will commit themselves to making education and training a lifetime endeavour.

Earlier, my colleague from Saint-Maurice corrected the record, and I would also like to do it so that my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, on the other side, will be happy. It is true that education is a provincial matter, a good responsibility, which I think extends beyond the Quebec border or any provincial border, because everything that is related to the development of such a great country as Canada is also related to the federal government. I think that to better coordinate education, while giving rights to the provinces, and we are living a very typical moment in history, Canadian unity is important. But it is not why I say that; it is because I really believe that Canada must have a special interest in the education of all its citizens.

A while ago, my colleague was talking about certain countries, and about how Canada compares with Germany and France. I even noted that Italy had the same problems. They make good progress, so why satisfy ourselves. For myself, as an immigrant, as an Italian Canadian, education is much more important. One language is not enough for us, neither are the two official languages. We would like to have three or four languages. For us, three is a minimum. Why? Because for our people, education means respect. For instance, in Italy, when a teacher or even certain politicians walk down the street, people stop to greet them. That shows how important education is. Professors have the title of doctor, whatever their subject. It is like in French, when they say "maître" to a lawyer. Why? Because education is very important for our people and we do not see that only in one area of the country, but everywhere. It is also because the development of education is of vital importance for the future of our businesses. The Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, who is also Minister of International Trade, recognized this explicitly in *Prosperity through Competitiveness* which was made public, I think, at the same time as *Learning Well—Living Well*.

This opinion is in fact shared by most countries around the world. Everyone is now aware of the absolute

necessity for the education system to adapt to the skilled labour requirements of the business sector in order to satisfy its needs efficiently.

The Governor General of Canada provided us with several disquieting facts in his throne speech last May. Three out of ten students drop out of high school before graduating; four out of ten adults cannot read or count well enough to perform everyday tasks; Canadian industry spends than half as much on training as American industry, a fifth as much as the Japanese and an eighth as much as the Germans.

He confirmed that the time has come, without infringing on provincial jurisdiction in this field, as I explained earlier, to reach a national consensus on performance, goals partnerships and priorities for learning. We are well aware of the challenges this will create.

This government has for many years recognized that drop-outs, the high cost of employee training in industry and illiteracy pose very serious problems.

To conclude, one can only applaud the member for Windsor—Lake St.—Clair's initiative in creating a Canadian Education Council. Such an agency, jointly funded by government and the private sector, which would provide the government with independent advice on research and action programs, is of obvious interest.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time allotted to me. The federal government intends to make every effort to support this essential cause.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion and, above all, to say how surprised I am to see Conservative members from Quebec speak with such eagerness in favour of a motion that gives the federal government more power in the area of education.

If there is an area that, historically, Quebec politicians wanted unanimously to keep under exclusive provincial jurisdiction, it is education. We can go back to Duplessis, who did not want the federal government to give money to universities because it was outside its jurisdiction.