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narrow issue contained in the motion. There is no question about the profound importance of the subject matter. That is why our Party established a task force on technological displacement and manpower training.

In conclusion, may I say that I believe all of us should place an extraordinary emphasis upon productivity both in terms of job creation and in terms of international competitiveness. The risks of interim solutions such as work sharing and discouraging high technology certainly cannot be in the interests of the country, private entrepreneurs operating within the country or employees who seek legitimate, long-term or permanent employment within the private sector.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the chance to speak after the Hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis) because it gives me an opportunity to say to him how much I have valued his contributions to the House and how much I personally regret the fact that he has decided to leave the House of Commons at the end of this Parliament.

Mr. Jarvis: You say it smilingly.

Mr. Roberts: It is a sad fact that people only say nice things when one has decided to go, but I say it smilingly and with pleasure because of the contribution he has made to the House. The House of Commons will be poorer for the fact that he will no longer be in it after this Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roberts: I also welcome this resolution, though I do not necessarily agree with all aspects of its wording. It puts before the House an extraordinarily important and indeed central question to the politics of the country for the future, that is, in essence, the impact of technological change on our country and what approaches the Government of Canada and society have to take to that technological change. Indeed Alvin Toffler was right when he said that the new wave which comes upon us and carries with it continual change is a new kind of situation in which it will become difficult to design government and social policies to respond to, but which will be absolutely essential and at the heart of the political process. The impact of technological change is not only a challenge to the economy of the country. It is also a challenge to our political Parties. It is a central question around which they will have to define their policies for the generation to come.

Those on the right often believe that the response to technological change will take place almost automatically through market forces. Those on the left often believe that it requires extensive government direction to have society adapt to these changes. We on this side of the House, if I could speak for my colleagues, would say that the essential approach to dealing with technological change is that it must be undertaken through a partnership—a partnership of government with labour, management, the private sector and others.

If we look at the impact of technological change on our society, not basically as a threat to society but as something

which will extend tremendous opportunity to Canadians, we admit that there is not in fact a consensus on the overall impacts. There is not yet a consensus on the part of futurists as to what the overall impact of technological change will be upon society. It is not something which we should fear. It is something to which we should respond positively.

I would like to talk about a few elements in the motion which the New Democratic Party has presented to us. In commenting upon them, I will be able to give some indication of how we believe that the approach to partnership can take place. I will be able to talk about some things we have already done as a government to try to implement that sense of partnership in responding to the problems of technological change. It will also enable me to indicate some areas where we still need ideas, from wherever they may come, and knowledge to help us better prepare and define our policies.

For instance, the motion refers to flexible work arrangements. As we look ahead, there is no doubt that increasing flexibility in work arrangements will be required in our economy both as an economic and a social need. Some people in the country, for instance, think that the idea of work sharing is a rather daring idea. They do not realize the extent to which work sharing is already taking place in Canada, not as some program or policy imposed by governments but as a program which is there because both workers and management want it and think it is useful in a variety of circumstances. Over the past two years work sharing has involved something like 120,000 participants in Canada. If I have time—and I may not—I hope later in my remarks to be able to describe in more detail how work sharing arrangements work. They are supported by the Government but they are essentially in response to needs defined by both labour and management.

We need more knowledge in the area of what the future is likely to bring in flexible work arrangements. It is for that reason that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) commissioned the Wallace report on part-time work. It is for that reason that my predecessor commissioned the skills development leave task force. Its final report should be in the hands of the Government within the next few weeks. We need to have a better understanding than we have now of the prospects and possibilities as well as the difficulties which may occur in the labour market of the future.

The motion refers to necessary retraining programs. Again I emphasize that while we are obviously undertaking extensive retraining programs, spending something like \$1 billion in Government of Canada funds on retraining this year, we need better knowledge than we now have to define precisely what will be the work opportunities for Canada's economy in the future. There is a need to have that definition of work opportunities as a necessary base for describing the proper retraining programs so that the substance of our retraining programs equips people for job opportunities which will be there rather than frustrate them by giving them new skills for which there is not adequate opportunity of exercise.

It is this need for more knowledge about the direction of the Canadian economy which underlies the Government's decision