

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Contrary to much what has been said by opponents of free trade, we do have in place already a number of mechanisms which can meet the new challenges presented by this agreement or other changes in the future, and the good news is that they work. Our Canadian Jobs Strategy is proving to be an effective instrument for meeting the challenges presented by labour market adjustment.

I think it is important, particularly for new Members, that I outline the principles and objectives and how the Canadian Jobs Strategy works. First, there are two important underlying objectives. One is to provide assistance where it is most needed at the local or industry level. The second is to provide assistance to individuals so their skills meet real and current labour market needs.

In 1985, when we introduced the Canadian Jobs Strategy, we knew we needed a flexible approach that could address change in the labour market, change in the future. This strategy is the very antithesis of the short-term, piecemeal, so-called "make-work" philosophy which for so long dominated the federal response to human resource management and adjustment.

An important aspect of our approach is flexibility, which allows us to meet the emerging labour market requirements of women, aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, the disabled, and social assistance recipients because our society is full of groups which are unique, have particular problems, and are therefore not the same as other groups.

In the Canadian Jobs Strategy we established fair and realistic target levels for participation of those groups within the strategy's component parts, as opposed to creating separate, isolated programs which do not work together to help our labour force and individuals within it to deal with changing conditions.

The component programs of the Canadian Jobs Strategy are well designed to plan for the future and provide flexibility. The six component parts are, first, the skill shortages program which helps train Canadians in skills that are in short supply and provides mobility assistance. Second, skill investment allows employers to train workers in new technologies. Third, the Community Futures Program helps create business and training opportunities in communities across Canada suffering from chronic unemployment or economic dislocation. Fourth, job entry provides integrated training and work experience to help young people and women make the transition to the labour market. For some that is a very

difficult transition. Fifth, job development is designed to enhance the employability of the long-term unemployed of any age, young or old, if they have been unemployed for a considerable period of time. They, too, have particular needs. Sixth, and finally, the innovations program encourages the testing of new projects and ideas that will improve the functioning of Canada's labour market.

[Translation]

Last year more than 400,000 Canadians benefitted from these six programs and nearly 90 per cent of them feel that their participation in Jobs Strategy programs did enhance their long-term employment prospects.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, flexibility is what makes Jobs Strategy different from any other program. Special programs for the young unemployed, language courses for immigrants, and other assistance measures for older workers are just a few of the adjustment assistance measures featured under Jobs Strategy programs.

If courses in a community college enable us to meet the needs of certain workers, we can make them available thanks to employment planning. If on-the-job training is what is needed, we can offer it with the co-operation of private sector employers.

[English]

Co-operation is truly another key to the Canadian Jobs Strategy since it involves in varying degrees the provinces, the private sector, community groups, labour organizations and educational institutions. However, let me cite some specific Canadian Jobs Strategy projects to demonstrate that not only is our approach working, it is working well. Manitoba Rolling Mills in Selkirk, Manitoba is one of North America's foremost mini steel mills. Quality control and technological adjustment are fundamental to its success. To maintain its competitive edge, it built a training centre, purchased \$18 million in new equipment, and developed a training regime for 650 employees. The company did that itself. With the help of the steel investment program a training trust fund has been established which allows workers and employers to select and monitor training packages designed to address changing industry conditions.

The skill investment program allows management and labour to set their own agenda for training. In this project, the company contributed \$1.1 million over three years, while Employment and Immigration added another \$400,000 in funding.