

Private Members' Business

Let me just come to a conclusion very shortly because I think that my time is almost up. I have to raise the question: Where do we go from here? What happens now?

If we were to do a poll and ask Canadians: "Do we want this kind of initiative?", I suspect that most would say yes. There are a number of well placed powerful individuals who say: "Yes, but only so far". We have got to break through that kind of elitism. We have got to take that extra step forward.

I think the people of Canada, all regions, all provinces want it. I think the government needs to take a serious look at this proposal. It needs to refine it, if it wishes to do so. It needs to discuss it with the various stakeholders, that is the provinces, the territories, the private sector and the people of Canada. Then the government needs to go forward with something extremely concrete.

Again, I must say that I am delighted that this project has been brought forward. I have said it and I am going to say it again. Education in the broadest sense of the terms is really a cornerstone of the modern, progressive, dynamic society. If we can learn to work together and synergize that which we do, then we will all profit from it, from an economic as well as a social, human dimension perspective.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I want to say that I hope the government will give this motion serious consideration and perhaps have it brought before the House again.

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State and to Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the proposal made by the member for Windsor—St. Clair with respect to the establishment of a Canadian Council on Education.

We all know how important education is for the future of our country, for its development and above all for its prosperity. Our standard of living, current and future, depends on our capacity to develop educational resources which should be efficient, attractive and accessible as well. Providing services is not enough for in order to do so, we must also have a thorough knowledge of all facets of this complex issue which is education. In this ever-growing and more complex world the needs in this area are increasingly varied.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to that reality. That would practically amount to suicide for our society.

More than one hundred and twenty-five years ago, Charles Darwin, the naturalist, stated a fact that is still very real when he said that one has to adapt to be able to survive.

To be able to survive as a prosperous nation and as a nation whose standard of living is directly related to its competitiveness, Canada must adapt to new realities in the field of education. And those realities are as numerous as varied.

One of them, which is not the least, is that trades are increasingly specialized. In less than a century, our society went from a economy largely based on the primary sector to an economy especially based on industry, that is the processing of raw materials into finished products.

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As we said in those times, you don't need a degree to become a farmer. Later on, since industrialization created needs, it became significantly more compelling to gain expertise in the various sectors associated with the production of goods. The incredible technologies that have developed over the last few decades have created a very different world. Today, it is obvious for everybody that in the 21st century we will have a service-based economy. There is a good reason why this is obvious for everybody—we already live in this futuristic world.

Mr. Speaker, this is a world of computers, aerospace and biotechnology. In short, it is a high technology world. That is precisely where education matters. Canada must have the capacity to train people for these jobs, to further knowledge in this area, and to understand clearly the social, economic, and cultural changes brought by high technology.

If we are to fulfill this ambition, our education systems must absolutely develop, they must progress more according to the new requirements that we now face. In that context, research on education would have all its meaning.

In that spirit, the federal government has tabled a paper entitled "Learning Well—Living Well", to initiate, on the national level, a discussion on Canadian objectives and priorities in learning and training, which will lead to a consensus. It is the Minister of Employment and Immigration who is responsible for holding this