

Adjournment Debate

Alberta is already addressing this issue through a teacher's research experience program. Other universities have identified it as one of the main weaknesses.

Dr. William Fyfe, Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Western Ontario, says that Canada faces an acute shortage of scientists in the near future. He states further:

The gap between the informed and those not is increasing. Scientific illiteracy is increasing. The root cause is the training of teachers and I think the universities have failed. We're trying to improve this with a new program for science teachers, and a very practical field program for kids of all ages, using the environment to teach basic science. We've made a start, but it needs lots of work.

Clearly we must work with teachers. We have to put in some energy. We have to call not just on the government and the ministers such as the minister responsible for science and technology, but the private sector to help.

During summer months science teachers of all levels are encouraged to take part in projects at the Alberta Research Council, for example. Those who oversee the programs say there is an amazing level of enthusiasm the teachers take back to the classroom. This is proving to be a very effective way of making science and technology a more attractive career choice for children.

I might add that a former colleague of ours, Mr. Elzinga, who is now the Minister of Trade for the province of Alberta, has joined in this debate fully. He wants his ministry and Alberta to respond to young Albertans and children to say that they have a future.

The University of Calgary has reaffirmed that women tend to score lower in science literacy and interest than men. The result, most agree, has to do with early conditioning.

But what is happening? I am happy to say that the B.C. government had funded a science camp for girls.

Recently, in London, Ontario, I noticed an advertisement stating that some trained female scientists are opening a camp for young Canadians. I think these are good steps.

[*Translation*]

The college dropout level is 30 per cent. This means 100,000 young people who are trying to enter the labour market without a college degree.

Canada ranks tenth among eighteen industrialized countries when we compare levels of college enrolment of seventeen-year-olds.

• (1750)

[*English*]

We have to stop this drop-out rate. We have to increase the opportunities for young people.

The minister has clearly shown some direction and his ministry is on side, but more effort is going to be required from all of us.

Canada needs trained scientists and mathematicians so that we can move ahead in research and development from being one of the worst nations in the world in terms of contributions to R and D in terms of our Gross National Product. I think we are about seventh in terms of our contributions. We should move up the ladder from the 1.3 per cent into the 2 per cent range. To do that we need the government and the private sector to work together so that there is the stimulus for young people to respond and to move into these fields as a career.

We need young people who can see when they are very young that they can work toward it with more enlightened and informed teachers. We can then start to see a Canada that is going to be competitive in the 1990s as we roll toward big competition from Europe, the Pacific Rim and indeed our partner the United States.

We can grow together. Young people will have the opportunity. They will not have to go away to learn science and become scientifically literate. Indeed, they will be able to make it part of their lifestyle in the future.

I urge the minister concerned to work with his colleagues and the Prime Minister to make it a priority with the Canadian government. The private sector will join in, and the young people of Canada will congratulate him.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Scholarships Program was announced by the Prime Minister in 1988 with the aim of recognizing and rewarding the best and brightest students entering undergraduate programs in natural sciences and engineering across Canada. The focus on excellence in the