

cal advance is shortening the useful life of knowledge gained through formal education or training.

• (1030)

The requirement for continued learning throughout an individual's working life must be recognized as a binding priority. In this important area this government has reduced its commitment and has clearly been left behind by its competitors.

Priority attention is being paid to developing human resources in Japan, Germany, Mexico, United States, and virtually all our major competitors. In this highly competitive age the economic performance of firms depends more than ever on a well trained work force.

The Liberal Party believes that training is not a cost but an investment. Education is an economic development. If we are to compete successfully with Japan, Germany, Mexico and the United States, federal government policies must encourage appropriate levels and types of vocational development within industry. Government support for training must be more actively focused. However, national industrial training programs are not making a significant contribution toward encouraging the employer sponsored training new technologies demand.

Employees in the most competitive firms increasingly require high flexibility skills which are essentially strong learning abilities, a willingness to change and an ability to work in teams.

But these flexibility skills are meaningless if young people do not stay in school. Over 30 per cent of students drop out before completing high school. Since unemployment affects the youth population in particular, this indicates an urgent need to deal with school drop-out.

I am not advocating that the federal government assume jurisdiction over the provincial responsibility of education, but what I am advocating is that the federal government must assume its own responsibility of its role to foster a Canadian controlled economic base. The role must be strong enough to secure Canada's place on the global stage. This requires the government's full participation.

There is little evidence of government commitment to Canadians today. The gulf between the rich and the poor is steadily widening. Record numbers are on welfare and

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unemployment insurance. Over 700,000 children need food banks. The future for young people in this country is bleak. As tuition fees increase and debt loads mount, many despair at finding work at all.

In my riding of York North the effects of less than full participation by government are pervasive and insidious. Government should be a vehicle of opportunity. Instead the citizens of the greater Toronto area feel victimized by this government's policies. Whole communities are at risk.

According to a study by the York Region Service Needs Committee, youth services have been placed on hold as provincial and municipal governments in turn feel the effects of the government's insensitive fiscal stringency.

Funding for counselling young people has evaporated. Unemployment among youth is increasing steadily as retraining courses and job placement programs are unable to achieve results. And this government believes it is doing enough.

The legacy of this belief is the failure of government incentives to improve sustainably the competitiveness of firms anywhere and everywhere in Canada. The focus should not be whether enough is being spent on training. The focus should be on whether Canadians are getting an efficient and innovative training system that spells results.

Clearly the more high wage good jobs Canada has, the better. Accordingly the most important set of policies this government could bring forward would be those that increase the capacity of innovative firms to expand. This expansion would be assisted most effectively through partnerships among all participants.

People are the key to making our economy work. To compete we must have a pool of Canadians skilled in the emerging technologies. We must have communities that attract and can retain these people. We need people committed to pulling together.

Canadians need to believe that they can make a difference. It remains to this government to show Canadians that it is willing to make a difference.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate today.