

Supply

We must also ask ourselves what will happen if the dropout rate remains at 30 per cent. Who will fill the new jobs requiring sound training if we do not have a sufficient number of skilled workers to fill these jobs? How will Canada compete in the rapidly growing global economy?

The Stay-in-School project not only enhances access to well-paying jobs for a lifetime, it helps youths to accede to a better quality life. It gets us wondering: who should help defining these problems and finding solutions?

The answer lies in the three components of the project, that is programs and services related to labour market and geared to students at risk of dropping out of school, mobilization of stakeholders in order to find solutions, and public awareness activities to inform Canadians on the consequences of the current dropout rate.

Of course, education comes under the responsibility of the provinces, and we fully respect their prerogative in that area. However, my honourable colleague will surely agree with me that the long term consequences of dropout could affect the whole economy of this country, and that, to curb the problem, we have to combine our efforts on a national level.

That is why we call upon all those affected by this problem: parents, union leaders, social groups, young Canadians, business people and teachers. We need the opinion of all those involved because they know better than we do the problems affecting their communities.

During the last fiscal year, we added to the Stay-in-School project a new component called Start Option. It is a \$16 million program that gives financial assistance for projects aimed at young people from 12 to 18 years of age.

Start Option is financed through the Job Entry Program of the Canadian Job Strategy and offers considerable flexibility. It allows organizations which qualify for the program, such as school boards, Indian bands and youth-oriented organizations, to receive funds in order to encourage young people to stay in school.

In the same vein, I have the pleasure to be able to point to my hon. colleague that, during the last fiscal year, Quebec joined the Stay-in-School project. A total

of \$1.5 million, including \$153,000 for the mobilization of stake-holders will be spent in Quebec under Start Option.

For example, last summer, in Montreal, ten drop-outs were sponsored by the YMCA du Parc under Start Option, and they all went back to school this year.

Furthermore, last year in Quebec the Canadian Jobs Strategy's job entry program received funding totalling nearly \$3.3 million, which benefited 176 participants.

I would like to give you and the hon. member for Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold the assurance that this government is doing everything it can, in Montreal as well as in the rest of Quebec and Canada, to help young Canadians become productive citizens.

When we adopted our Labour Force Development Strategy two years ago, our aim was to consolidate programs that promote the social integration of young people. Thanks to this strategy, our Co-operative Education Program has become even more accessible in high schools and universities across Canada. The program, which is very popular, gives students an opportunity to combine education and job experience, and we are committed to increasing funding for this very important program.

The Labour Force Development Strategy has led to an increase in entry-level skills development and has helped direct young unemployed workers towards the programs and services they need to find work. By further developing co-operative education, by improving apprenticeship programs and by emphasizing a comprehensive and concrete approach to entry-level skills development, we are giving young Canadians the kind of training they need to find a niche in a very competitive labour market. The government is using all these programs and initiatives to try and improve training and job opportunities for young Canadians.

Last year, the Science Council of Canada published a report in which it said that to sustain international competition, it was necessary to co-operate at the national level. That is what the government does. It creates partnerships with business, unions, the provinces and social agencies. A recent example is the \$7.4 million the government has committed, over a period of three years, to research and development in the field of counselling methods and training programs for counsellors.