

One would think these figures would convince young Canadians that an education is important if they want a decent future. Unfortunately, that is not really the case. About 30 per cent of Canadian students drop out of high school. If the present drop-out rate continues, by the year 2000, one million under-educated and untrained young people will have joined the ranks of the labour force, at a time when the demands of global competition are such that we need an increasingly educated and skilled labour force.

Hon. members know that if Canada is to continue expanding as a trading nation, it cannot afford the social costs generated by an uneducated labour force that cannot compete with that of other countries. Since skill requirements in various sectors are increasing, the result will be a definite lack of productivity at a time that is critical for the Canadian economy.

Today, the number of researchers and scientists in this country is among the lowest per capita of all industrialized nations. In a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada last year, two Canadian companies out of three stated that among their employees they had a number of people who were illiterate and thus incapable of doing the tasks they were supposed to do. Furthermore, half of Canada's companies have trouble finding qualified employees with the requisite skills. In fact, earlier this year, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development made it clear that a lack of skilled workers was the most serious problem facing our economic growth in the 90s.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that most members are aware of these facts. If we are to compete effectively in a global economy, we must take the necessary steps to provide our labour force with the skills it needs to meet the future requirements of the labour market.

That is why the government is leading the way in this area by taking steps to help young Canadians prepare for tomorrow. However, we are not alone in having to deal with this responsibility. In fact, the co-operation of industry and unions, provincial governments, educational institutions, communities, parents and young people themselves is both crucial and necessary.

Through the department responsible for Youth, the government is about to implement the *Stay in School*

Supply

project. To that end, we have allocated \$296.4 million. The project is aimed first of all at persuading young people to continue their secondary education. Although we realize that education is first and foremost a provincial matter, we intend to take advantage of the knowledge and good will of anyone who is anxious to find a solution to this problem.

Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to acknowledge the excellent work being done by teachers in this country. However, the time has come to create new partnerships in order to help our schools and reinforce the connection between education and the labour market. I would like to point out that this objective is about to be met thanks to the *Stay in School* project. Our plan is threefold. First, the federal government is developing new labour market entry programs and services and expanding existing ones to create awareness among those still attending school. There are the Cooperation Education Program, career workshops, Canada Career Week and counselling services to name a few.

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We have since developed an activity called Starting Point as part of the Job Entry Program, which is an element of the Canadian Job Strategy. It is aimed at providing the young people with numerous tools, such as career evaluation, adoptive school and job experience.

Second, we are mobilizing our partners at the national and local levels to get them involved in solving the problem. In the Mobilization of partners part of the program, we are bringing together counsellors and business people, labour representatives, teachers, parents, social organization officials and the young people themselves. I recently arranged a series of meetings with the young people, including young native people. Widening the scope of the labour market entry programs is one thing, but solving the drop out problem is another. That is why a concerted effort is essential.

The best thing to do is to start by gaining the support of the young people who were confronted to the problem so that they can relate their experience.

During the next four years, the federal government, on the advice of the provincial and territorial governments, will work closely with groups interested in issues