

*Government Orders*

not spending that money on education. They were spending it on other issues. That was one problem. In the past the federal government should have told the provinces that every dollar it was giving to education, it wanted to make sure that dollar was spent on education. It did not do so. As a result of that we have seen a deterioration in terms of investment at the provincial level in the areas of education.

At the present time, not only is the federal government not telling the provinces how it wants them to spend the money when it comes to education, the federal government is backing off on its commitment. Therefore, we are seeing less and less government funds going into the area of education.

That means that over the next decade or so, about 65 per cent of all jobs that will be created in Canada will require at least a grade 12 education. We are going to see a situation where we have less and less people who are equipped to enter the work force and be fully productive in our society.

Why do I say this? The statistics speak for themselves. Right now there is over a 30 per cent dropout rate at the post-secondary education level. In other words, one out of every three youths does not finish high school for whatever reason. That is one cause for alarm.

The other cause for alarm is the terrible question of illiteracy. The illiteracy rate here in Canada is extremely high. Approximately 38 per cent of Canadians are functionally illiterate. Compare that to a country such as Japan which has an illiteracy rate of about 5 per cent or to Germany which has an illiteracy rate of approximately 12 per cent or so. The conclusion is that there is something fundamentally wrong in terms of our society and how we deal with the question of illiteracy and the question of education.

It is interesting to know that not only is the question of education so important and so alarming when we look at the statistics, but at the same time, it is important when we look at the percentage of unemployed people. For ask instance, it has been found that if we have a group of people who have university degrees, we are likely to find that the unemployment rate is something around 10 per cent, which is in line with the national statistics. However, when we look at people who have a high school level of education, we find that the percentage of unemployment is somewhere around 16 per cent to 18 per cent.

When we look at the lower end of the scale, i.e., people who do not have a high school education, the percentage of unemployment in that particular segment of the population is somewhere around 24 per cent or 25 per cent.

It is not really difficult to see the correlation between a good education and good jobs. The more highly educated the work force or the population is, the better jobs they will get and the less unemployment we will find.

Having said all of that, there is also a lot to say about the health of the population. If a student, regardless of his or her age, goes to school hungry, it is highly unlikely he or she will learn as much as other children might learn if his or her stomach is full. The reason I say this is because we are finding more and more in schools all across the country that we have children who are going to school hungry.

That brings me to the second segment of my discussion and that is the transfer payments relating to health care, social assistance programs, social services and everything else. Every time the federal government cuts a dollar from the transfer payments to the provinces, do you know who feels it? The child on the street feels it. It is because the provinces in turn unload part of their responsibilities on to the municipalities. By unloading part of their responsibilities on to the municipalities, we are finding that more and more municipalities are unloading their responsibilities on to charitable organizations, non-profit organizations, church groups and special interest groups.

As a result of that, every level of government seems to be passing on its responsibility to someone else. Everything nowadays is falling on the school system and on the backs of the teachers in particular. Our teachers are now finding themselves as not only being teachers but also social workers, nurses, family planners, psychologists and food bank operators. In many of the urban centres in our society that is the kind of thing we are seeing on a daily basis.

What that tells me is that not only are we failing to do our job in the most effective way when it comes to dealing with the question of education, but we are also not providing the tools necessary for the people to do the work. We are not providing them with the necessary support that they deserve and they need.