

Industrial Eye Safety Program

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There can be no doubt that one of our most precious gifts is our sight. Unfortunately, our family knows this all too well since my dad's dad, Grandpa Rudneski, lost an eye while repairing a closed-in cutter many decades ago and had his other eye severely damaged in a farm accident shortly thereafter.

It's for these and other reasons that I was very pleased to learn about the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's industrial eye safety program, which was launched earlier this month.

In 2007 the CNIB Alberta received \$95,000 in start-up funding from a court-ordered penalty against an employer who failed to adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The funding provided an impetus to launch an eye safety program in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada.

It's a very important program, Mr. Speaker. There are close to 1,700 disabling eye injuries at work in our province alone every year. Like all workplace injuries and illnesses they are preventable. In fact, 90 per cent of these incidents could be avoided simply by using appropriate eyewear.

The CNIB program is delivered by facilitators with vision loss. Utilizing real-life stories, shocking visuals, and interactive exercises, they educate employers and workers about eye safety in the workplace, and they motivate them to follow safe work practices. The funds generated by this program are invested in the agency's rehabilitation programs for people with vision loss.

This is an excellent example of how alternative sentencing puts funds from court penalties for health and safety violations back into preventing future injuries and caring for injured workers.

I'd like to commend all of those involved with the program, including our Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.