

*Oral Questions***UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION****DELAY IN MAKING PAYMENTS UNDER WORK PROGRAMS IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. While I am pleased to hear that the Government is launching a number of new employment programs, I want to tell him that there are thousands of people in British Columbia alone, working on those programs, who are beginning to wonder why they are working in the bush in sub-zero temperatures in snow and rain, not getting paid for weeks and weeks, while other people sit home and collect. What kind of reward is that for initiative?

Last fall, with my colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-St. James and a number of other Members, I drew the attention of the Government to these non-payment problems and made some suggestions. At that time some minor improvements were made but since then the whole mess of non-payment has become worse than ever. The UIC pay centre employees and management in Vancouver have a backlog of some 4,000 UIC and EBAP cheques. EBAP employees in Parksville, Campbell River, Salmo, Kaslo, Terrace, Nelson and places throughout the Province are having trouble. We want to see some action.

The corrective measures taken by the Minister have not worked. What new measures will he take? What new systems will be put in place? What does he plan to do to clean up this backlog before the UIC gets further bogged down in other welcome job creation programs so that the new ones may have a chance to work?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Hon. Member is in favour of and approves the job creation initiatives that we have taken. I will certainly respond to his concerns about the administration.

I should point out to the Hon. Member that in part we are experiencing problems because of the success of the program in its take-up. The Section 38 programs have close to 9,000 people enrolled in them, particularly in the rural areas of British Columbia. Those people must be paid through the unemployment insurance system, and this is now being done manually.

We are accelerating the implementation of the on-line computer system for handling unemployment insurance payouts in the British Columbia region. We hope to have that completed by February. That will mean that we will not have to utilize the manual method, which is a longer and more complicated way of doing it. We will be able to put it on the computer and make it easier to handle.

Mr. Kristiansen: Madam Speaker, as recently as Monday a representative of the Government, speaking in the adjournment debate said, referring to the EBAP program, "Interest in

the program is steadily increasing now that the normal growing pains and the birth pains of the Program are over." The Parliamentary Secretary said this on Monday afternoon.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member took two minutes to ask his first question. I cannot allow him more than half a minute.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER MAKE PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Madam Speaker, there seems to be a divorce between their perceived reality and the facts. Would the Minister agree to accompany me, or other Members, to British Columbia to meet with his own officials and with people drawing unemployment, to find out what the situation really is and whether his solutions are really working?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for the invitation and his offer of company. I must tell him that I was in British Columbia last week, meeting with my officials about this specific issue. We took the steps we have just announced to bring the system on line. I think we can save the taxpayers the cost of an additional trip to British Columbia. Instead, I will be staying here and working on other programs.

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RAILWAYS**CROWSNEST PASS RATE—INQUIRY WHETHER PAYMENTS WILL
BE RELATED TO PERFORMANCE**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind that the thesis of the announcement made by the Minister of Transport in Winnipeg yesterday was that the railways would get more money by some contributions from the Government and from farmers, setting aside the merits and demerits of that specific formula for the moment, could the Prime Minister indicate whether, on the basis of getting more money, the railways will be required to meet a target of performance? If they are going to meet a target of performance, will it be measured by the volume delivered to the ports per year? Also, will there be a penalty to the railways in terms of financial payment if they do not meet the delivery target?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I will take the question as notice.

Mr. Malone: Madam Speaker, I would be just as pleased if the Prime Minister would take the question as a representation.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR CHANGES

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, as long as there has been a Crow rate in the country, one of the great facts that farmers could live by has been that, irrespective of