

*Supply*

[English]

When we read the Bloc motion, we wonder where its members have been. Like Rip Van Winkle, they have been asleep for the last while. They neither take into account the statement made by the Prime Minister, which says very clearly that we will be prepared and in fact will welcome the opportunity to give full responsibility for education and training to the provinces.

The tabling last Friday of the legislation for employment insurance clearly indicates once again that the area of education and training is the jurisdiction of the provinces. Furthermore, we would go beyond that and take in those areas of direct employment activity that are within our constitutional orbit and share with the provinces, sit down and work in concert with the provinces, plan with the provinces, co-operate with the provinces for one reason: to develop a partnership for employment.

Yet Bloc members bring in a motion that totally and completely misses the point. They are saying that somehow there will be more intrusion, more activity and no withdrawal. It seems this group simply cannot take yes for an answer. When we say we are going to do exactly what is being proposed, they seem oblivious, unable to filter it out. That only confirms my suspicion that all the speeches, all the motions and all the commentaries were written before we even got around to making good on the initiative of the Prime Minister or tabling legislation. They just pulled it out of the old vault, took out the old speeches from the old drawers, put new dates on them, and presented them once again without taking a look at reality or the facts or the hopeful signs.

• (1050)

With the initiative we announced on Friday we can begin developing a whole new set of relationships with provinces, communities and individuals directed toward the creation of jobs and employment. It is the beginning of a new dialogue about how we can come together and form arrangements so we can share responsibility. If people are unemployed they do not care whether it is a provincial or a federal jurisdiction, they simply want a job. That is what it is all about.

As I listened to the hon. member for Mercier carefully, what was beginning to creep into the language was that she was far more concerned about transferring power to bureaucrats in provincial capitals than putting money directly into the hands of individuals so they can get back to work. That is the real issue. Power is at the heart of this motion, not employment. It is the opportunity to control and manage, not to provide a new form of empowerment for individuals. That is what the debate is really about. It is really oldspcak government. It is really setting the clock back.

When Canadians in whatever region are looking for government to provide new leadership, new formulas, new methods, we have an opposition party that is retreating back into the romantic past, trying once again to dig up the old speeches that were written 30 or 40 years ago and not dealing with the difficult new realities in a world where work has changed.

The major modernization of the insurance system of Canada for employment is pegged on one important reality, that the world of work is changing and we must keep up and be relevant to that world of work. That is why the measures we have introduced state that the clear responsibility that was given by the provinces to the federal government in 1941 to be responsible for the basic insurance program for Canadians dealing with unemployment had to be modernized. I will be the first to say that throughout the years it has been a good program. It has provided an enormous bridge of support for generation after generation of Canadians who have faced unemployment.

We should take some real pride in the fact that the federal government has been able to ensure not only security for the individual but security for the regions. Areas where there was wealth, growth, and jobs were able to share with those who were less advantaged. That has been the genius of the program. It was built on sharing, something our hon. friends opposite forget about. Sharing is not part of their vocabulary. Co-operation is not part of their vocabulary, the notion that somehow they can have a national system of insurance that enables Canadians to distribute support and security because we all mutually benefit from it. It is not a matter of charity but of good investment. We must make sure we can support the various measures in areas where they are faced with high unemployment so that those areas with lower unemployment do not have to bear the full burden in a geographic way.

This plan has worked for most of its years, but it is changing because Canada is changing. What we have been discovering in the last decade or so is that the original architecture was no longer sufficient to meet a world where the work has changed, a world where we now have hundreds of thousands of part time workers, where there are multiple job owners who were not being given any protection, where individuals were facing much tougher problems of adjustment when jobs or skills changed.

There is one thing that is clear from every single analysis and study that has been done internationally and nationally: the higher the level of literacy, skill and education, the better the chance for a job. There are lots of anecdotes and examples of people with good degrees who cannot find work. That is one reason we have introduced the youth internship program, which enables young people to move from school to work in an easier fashion through industry support and small business.