

*Oral Questions*

● (1122)

[Translation]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****RECOVERY OF OVERPAYMENTS OF BENEFITS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In light of the report submitted by the Auditor General which indicates among other things that in 1976 the Unemployment Insurance Commission had made overpayments of \$95 million, could the minister explain how the commission intends to recover that amount without victimizing the persons who were eligible and what steps will be taken to put a stop to so many mistakes?

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my French teachers and to the hon. members but I must answer in English.

[English]

The Auditor General has performed an excellent service for us. He has indicated he will continue to do so. The commission has worked very closely with the Auditor General. In fact, he did not say there was an overpayment. He said that it was possible there could have been that kind of an overpayment, and that control mechanisms had to be tightened up. Some of the recommendations of the Auditor General are already in place. We have asked him to monitor the action we have taken on the administrative or the control mechanisms to see to it that it is made as perfect a system as possible. We do not want to expand the number of man-hours required to meet all the requirements of the Auditor General in order to make it a perfect control mechanism system.

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[Translation]

**MANPOWER****ALLEGED WEAKNESS OF ADMINISTRATION OF TRAINING PROGRAM**

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In his report, the Auditor General indicated also many deficiencies in the administration of the Canada Manpower Centre programs. He emphasized for instance that the master client registration forms were not employed effectively, that there were no verifications required of the number of dependents claimed by the client, and that overpayments resulted from the policy of assumed attendance by those who supposedly take training courses sponsored by a manpower centre. Could the minister advise the House of the steps he will take to correct these weaknesses found in the administration of these services, which account in fact for 55 per cent of all the payments made by his department?

[English]

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, true to his word,

[Mr. Cullen.]

monitored the actions taken by the government last year, and complimented the government for many of the moves taken. Needless to say, as a result of the honest and unbiased report which he has made, in so far as my department is concerned, we will look into those particular areas and will expand on them somewhat when we appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I do not think I can give all the responses the hon. member would like during oral question period. I can assure him that very, very close attention will be paid to the recommendations of the Auditor General.

[Translation]

**REQUEST FOR MORE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS**

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Hundreds of people have been on the waiting list for 18 to 24 months to be trained as heavy equipment operators. Is the minister prepared to increase the number of training centres providing this kind of training to give those people, particularly the younger ones, the opportunity to qualify for heavy equipment operators which will give them a better chance to get a job?

[English]

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the initiative in this particular area must be taken in fact by the provinces. I should like to commend the Turner Valley operation in the province of Alberta. It is a private enterprise initiative taken by a gentleman there, when he could not find the appropriate number of schools and professors who would stay on the job, or when he could not get heavy equipment operators. In fact, he used the old Canadian private initiative system and established an excellent school. I would recommend that to all provinces that have waiting lists of people who want to become heavy equipment operators.

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**CANADIAN SALTFISH CORPORATION****ALLEGATION KICKBACKS WERE PAID—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

**Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. The Auditor General has stated that his examination of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation accounts for 1976-1977 show evidence that the corporation has engaged in questionable trade practices by paying out something like \$400,000 in kickbacks. In some cases these kickbacks were deposited in bank accounts outside the country of the recipient.

In view of the fact that this corporation comes under the direct control of the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment, and therefore the direct control of the government, did the government authorize this practice? Will the government take any disciplinary action against the chairman responsible for this practice under the Financial Administration Act? Will