

## Oral Questions

● (1415)

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## EMPLOYMENT

## IMPLEMENTATION OF JOB-CREATION PROGRAM

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister announced that application forms for his new job-creation program will not be available until the end of December. He knows that it takes another six to eight weeks for application forms to be filled out by groups and to be processed, as we have just seen with the community development projects. This would mean that there would be no new jobs created under the program until approximately the end of February.

Given the fact that there are thousands of people who run out of unemployment benefits each week, that welfare rolls are soaring, and that 1.5 million people are out of work, why does it take three to four months of delay before a program is implemented to provide new jobs, even when it was announced in October?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is really asking several questions. The answer to them is basically that we have set the target date of January 1 for the program and that it may be possible to deliver it earlier. Because of the success of negotiations with the provincial Governments, we may be in a position to start processing proposals even before Christmas so that they will be in place in January. I think her comments about three to four months of delay are not well taken. In fact, we will be offering employment under the program before then. Also, I remind her that in the period beginning now, through to Christmas, a number of work programs are being initiated through the Canada Community Development Program which will provide close to 60,000 jobs for the very people about whom she is talking. Those are coming onstream at the moment.

**Miss MacDonald:** I am concerned about the urgency of the situation. The Minister's own press release indicated the end of December.

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## WELFARE

## REQUEST FOR FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MEETING OF MINISTERS

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Between now and February approximately 70,000 people per month will run out of unemployment insurance benefits. Some of those people will qualify for welfare, but a great many of them will not and will be in very real difficulty. Although the Minister may see this

as primarily a provincial responsibility, will she consider, in this emergency situation, calling together the provincial Ministers of Welfare to see if something could be done about the increasing number of people who are running out of unemployment insurance benefits and cannot qualify for welfare?

[Translation]

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I do not quite understand the Hon. Member's question. In Canada, people who run out of unemployment insurance benefits or who for any other reason are indigent, can qualify for welfare. That is why I do not see who could not qualify. I fail to see a problem here that would require consultation with the provincial ministers, with whom our relations are consistently very good, since we automatically refund to them the amounts they spend on welfare payments. Could the Hon. Member possibly elaborate?

[English]

## NATURE OF INDIVIDUAL CASES

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, perhaps if I explain it to the Minister she would understand better. I am talking about the people who are falling between the safety nets, for example, a family where the husband has run out of unemployment insurance benefits and the wife has only a part-time job. The part-time job does not provide a sufficient income to look after a family of four, but it is too high to allow the husband to qualify for welfare and, as a result, they end up losing their home, car and other assets. These are the things which I feel the Minister could discuss with her provincial counterparts. I would like her to consider situations of this nature.

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I assure the Hon. Member that there are not many Canadians, not at all, who will fall between the safety nets as she suggested. The NEED Program announced by my colleague is especially conceived to employ the very people who are exhausting their UIC benefits for the time needed in order to requalify for benefits. As to the rate paid by the Provinces for welfare—and they know it very well—we are in constant discussion about the situation today, and for any Province that wants to increase its rates we would reimburse half of it immediately and automatically.

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● (1420)

## EMPLOYMENT

## IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT CREATION PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR UPDATE REPORT

**Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister will recall that last June a job-creation program