

Oral Questions

Brunswick are still unsure of their status with respect to the period of eligibility for unemployment insurance. The change-over from ten to sixteen weeks applies to all rural areas, which are bearing the brunt of a change that was meant for urban centres. In July, the Minister allowed for separate treatment for the Outaouais area, because the urban area of Hull did not reflect the situation of the rural population. The situation is exactly the same in New Brunswick. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration stated in its unanimous report, right at the beginning, and I quote:

Your Committee believes that there should be no tightening of entrance requirements nor reductions in either the level or duration of benefits in high unemployment regions. At the same time, your Committee supports the principle that the same treatment should be afforded claimants in all regions.

My question is this: Can the people of New Brunswick expect to receive the same treatment as the people in the Outaouais, and will the fair treatment the Prime Minister demanded for the people in his riding and for people in disadvantaged areas also apply to the people of New Brunswick?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the situation in our so-called disadvantaged areas because I come from a region where as far as I am concerned, the unemployment rate is still far too high. So I can assure the Hon. Member that I am concerned about these regions.

The House is also aware that regional unemployment is used to determine the number of weeks required to meet the criteria: between ten and fourteen weeks. It is also true that when the economy improves, which happened, because we are an excellent Government, in certain regions, the criteria must be changed as well. So I can say that I am concerned. I have ordered a study, and in the weeks to come, I should be delighted to provide the requisite response.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has the floor to ask a very short supplementary question, please.

SITUATION IN NEW BRUNSWICK—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, the answer is completely unacceptable. For people in some regions, they act right away. For New Brunswickers, they take the time to conduct studies. The Minister has all the information at hand, namely the unemployment rate for all regions of New Brunswick. So will the Minister act now to give New Brunswickers justice?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, this Government treats Canadians of whatever region fairly. We worked hard with an employment strategy and a healthy economy. Economic conditions are excellent and as I was saying, we are putting in place mechanisms tailored to workers in New Brunswick as elsewhere.

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

WALPOLE ISLAND—PROPOSED WATER PIPELINE FROM LAKE HURON

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Finance. Since the dramatization of the blob in the St. Clair River by my colleague from Essex—Windsor the communities of Wallaceburg and Walpole Island Indian Reserve have experienced 247 spills and five water cut-offs. The Province of Ontario has promised 75 per cent of the funding for a pipeline from Lake Huron.

My question to the Government is this. When will the Government respond to the requests of the Hon. Member for Kent and the people of Walpole Island and Wallaceburg and kick in its share so that that pipeline can be completed?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the Hon. Member that members from the Government side have already brought this matter to our attention. There have been meetings held by the regional office in Ontario to discuss with the Walpole Band and other concerned citizens the opportunities that can be realized by joining together with the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada to provide the service. The Hon. Member must recognize, and so should the Province of Ontario, that Indian people who happen to live on Walpole Island also have an opportunity to secure drinking water from that pipeline without additional costs being provided.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the Minister was trying to say. The question is very simple. Some \$288 million was provided for the Prime Minister's riding. Only a couple of million are necessary here to provide clean water for Walpole Island, which is a federal responsibility, and Wallaceburg. You have a Member there who is being hung out to dry.

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is not being hung out to dry. He has been very active in acquiring an opportunity that has been provided because of an expenditure by the Government of Ontario so that we can join with the Government of Ontario to provide access to drinking water to Walpole Island. There are discussions going forward now between the regional district in Ontario and Walpole Island.

The Hon. Member talks about spills and clean water and refers to the Prime Minister's riding. Some \$110 million were spent on the St. Lawrence, which goes beyond the Prime Minister's riding. If the NDP and the Hon. Member are against the clean-up of the St. Lawrence, then please say so.