

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

POSSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS BEING INTRODUCED BEFORE JULY

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I put my question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

In the last throne speech, it was mentioned that amendments would be brought to the Unemployment Insurance Act. In view of the bad service given to the public in northwestern Quebec and by several other unemployment offices in Canada, could the minister say whether he intends to change the act before July 1975?

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): No, Mr. Speaker.

POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED DEMAND ON FUND—
NOTIFICATION TO MINISTER CONCERNED

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Minister of Finance. As the Finance Minister's recent no real growth projection for the Canadian economy in 1975 implies a considerably higher unemployment rate than that suffered now by Canadians, can the minister tell the House whether the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has been notified that he should expect a much greater drain of Unemployment Insurance Commission funds than would have been expected prior to the minister's new projections?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Minister of Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the projections for unemployment insurance benefit requirements are formulated basically by analysts of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and, instead of the government informing them what the projections are to be, it is the other way around.

POSSIBLE INADEQUACY OF ITEM IN MAIN ESTIMATES TO
MEET INCREASE IN BENEFIT PAYMENTS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration who is responsible for the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Assuming that the minister is aware that even higher unemployment rates are to be expected in 1975 and that benefit payments are already up 27 per cent over those made in a comparable period last year, is the minister prepared to concede that the \$864 million item in the main estimates for the government's contribution to the unemployment insurance account will be totally inadequate to cover the cash drain resulting from larger benefit pay-outs.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, far too many variables are involved to permit me to make a precise forecast and confirm the response the hon. member desires from me.

Oral Questions

COMPUTER TRAP TO CATCH THOSE RECEIVING BENEFITS
WHO ARE INELIGIBLE—SUGGESTED CONTINUANCE OF
OPERATION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration on a subject which does not involve any variables. It has been reported that a computer trap set up under a pilot scheme caught 1,000 people cheating when applying for unemployment insurance benefits. An official indicated that at least 50,000 people may be cheating.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: I heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare muttering over there. He had better stick to his old job.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister, probably, was referring to the rather extensive announcement I made on Monday, when I indicated to hon. members the desire that, to supplementaries, there should be absolutely no preamble.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it was only four lines, hand-written. Does the minister confirm this figure and will he assure the House that he will put the pilot scheme into general operation, in order to catch the cheaters.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the commission is continuously seeking to protect the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance system. The use of computers combined with the improved record of employment process was introduced in January, 1974. The recent story which caught the hon. member's fancy—

Mr. Alexander: It is not fancy; it is fact.

Mr. Andras:—involves 1,000 people. The statistic which results from an examination of that particular location does not project the number of people involved elsewhere. I simply come back to the point that we are constantly improving our operation, in order to give better service and exercise better control.

Mr. Alexander: Where are the amendments to the act?

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES AUTO PACT—GOVERNMENT ACTION
TO COUNTERACT DEFICIT

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: It's nice to see you back.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, it is nice to be missed. May I direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and