

The Economy

Mr. Yurko: Madam Speaker, I wish to put a serious complaint before the House with respect to my privileges on the basis that it was not—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have ruled on the matter. The Hon. Member has had a chance to express his views, but regardless of his views, which I appreciated, I have ruled that we will have a period of 20 minutes to question the Minister.

Mr. Yurko: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I would inform the House and the Chair that it is my intention to raise a point of privilege at the earliest opportunity in connection with your ruling just now, because you did not seek unanimous consent earlier.

Madam Speaker: Order. If the Hon. Member feels he has a question of privilege, he may raise it. He does not need to give notice to the House but only to the Speaker in writing. If he consults the rules he will remember that any question of privilege may be raised after a written statement has been given to the Speaker. However, I warn the Hon. Member that a ruling has been made and that he may not discuss it.

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THE ECONOMY

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed, from Wednesday, October 27, consideration of the statement of Mr. Lalonde.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) proposed a \$500 million program to provide jobs for some 60,000 individuals over the next 18 months. Meanwhile, his Government's own projections show that there could be as many as 790,000 individuals who will run out of unemployment benefits during the next nine months. Many of these people will have to go on welfare, which is causing an enormous amount of concern in the country. Where does the Minister expect municipalities such as Toronto, Kingston or Sudbury suddenly to find their share of the money which they will have to pay to support these people through the winter, people who are without jobs not because of anything the municipalities have done but because of the economic policies of the Government?

● (1550)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) answered this question in good part earlier this afternoon when he revealed from his scientific study released this summer that between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of those who exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits find jobs. Then there is another group of people who either have savings or have managed to rearrange their affairs, and only 10 per cent of the total actually end up on social assistance programs.

The program we have put forward will significantly contribute toward dealing with the particular difficulty raised by the

Hon. Member. I would also like to point out to the Hon. Member that in addition to the \$500 million, there is an amount of \$1.4 billion in direct job-creation programs and other programs that we have announced over the course of this year which are either in effect at the present time or will come into effect in the next few months. Literally there will be hundreds of thousands more jobs created, a lot more than the 60,000 jobs to which the Hon. Member was referring. For instance, there is a particular program for November, December, January and February, which will encompass expenditures of \$300 million to help those who are unfortunately no longer receiving insurance benefits. I think the Hon. Member has to bear in mind the totality of the programs that are in operation at the present time, not only the ones that I announced yesterday.

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, I regret that the Minister's answer only underlines the fact that he has not taken into consideration the tremendous problem arising for a great number of people who will have to go on welfare this winter. They have no other way out.

How are municipalities expected to prepare for this massive assault on their very limited resources? The Minister may very well know that the municipalities cannot even get reliable estimates outlining how many people are going to go off UIC benefits and on to welfare for weeks ahead, let alone for the whole of the coming winter.

Could the Minister at least undertake to make this information available to individual municipalities throughout the country? If the Minister of Finance does not have the information, will he order the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) to get that information and provide it to the municipalities?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, again the Hon. Member has referred to 790,000 people. Assuming the same percentage, 10 per cent, would apply to 79,000 people, for the program I have announced and the programs that we already have in operation will be more than able to cope with the particular problem which the Hon. Member has raised.

Second, I would remind the Hon. Member that there are some Provinces where the provincial government is paying the full 50 per cent of the social assistance.

Miss MacDonald: No, not in Ontario, Manitoba or Nova Scotia.

Mr. Lalonde: I know this is not the case in Ontario. It has been the decision of the Ontario Government to divide the responsibilities for social assistance that way. We are still paying 50 per cent of whatever social assistance is required.

Finally, in answer to the Hon. Member's question, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, as I have indicated, is in Toronto this afternoon proceeding with those consultations to which she has referred. When the program and the details of it are finalized after the Minister's consultations, we