

Employment Tax Credit Act

I should like to bring to the minister's attention the fact that when today he stood in the House of Commons to announce his \$137 million program, in my brief one or two minutes of questioning I asked him simply to define a job, because we cannot understand what our money is being spent on unless we have some definition of a job. In the data which have come out through the course of the day, we have the kind of example I mean about the difficulty of dealing with statistics. We have a program called the community services program. The minister's own officials told us that it will create approximately 1,000 jobs for an expenditure of \$11 million, and the minister told us that the cost of those jobs is approximately \$200 a week.

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If we go down the list of measures announced in the House, we come to native training which is an expenditure of \$10 million and the cost is about \$200 a week. So, it is very similar—\$11 million in one case and \$10 million in the other, \$200 a week in both cases. But we are told that 3,900 jobs are created for native people. How can that be with \$200 a week for both programs and approximately the same expenditure? The answer is that native people are employed for one-quarter of the time other people in the community services project are employed. Can we call those equal jobs when native people in the country are employed for one-quarter of the time of the other group?

I suggest to the minister that we might be able to move more quickly to understand the legislation if we began to use numbers and figures which had a common definitional base so that we all knew with the same degree of understanding what we were talking about. I should like to continue on that vein for just a minute.

When I first got the minister's statement on his programs and the background pages, I had someone in my office add up the number of jobs supposedly created, and it came to 192,000. Then I went and looked into it a little more closely, and some were listed as new program, some were old program, and some were continuing program. We went to the minister's office and got a complete list of the new programs. In the meantime the minister was in a press conference and announced 81,000 jobs. Some diligent reporter continued to inquire, and officials said that it would be 31,000 jobs. After the inquiries here today, I think we now have the kind of very simple data base which most of us understand. If we have an employer tax credit program about which the parliamentary secretary told us, the data shows that it created about 45,000 jobs last year. The minister told us that those jobs were created on the basis of \$65 a week. Approximately 45,000 jobs were created by the employer tax credit at \$65 a week.

Now we have from the minister an indication that the bulk of the programs he announced in the House in terms of direct employment creation cost between \$200 and \$260 a week. They are at least three times as expensive as the employer tax credit. If that one creates 45,000 jobs, then using the same base, the minister's announcement in the House would have to

be 15,000 jobs. It would not be 31,000, 81,000 or 192,000 jobs, but 15,000. But those 45,000 jobs created by the employer tax credit are within a defined fiscal year. In response to our questions today, the minister told us that his \$137 million goes over two years. So, if we take the 15,000 jobs and divide it in half, because half will be this year and half will be next year, then the announcement dealt with 7,500 jobs. It will be 7,500 jobs for a \$137 million announcement. It has taken us several days in the House of persistent inquiry to get answers to enough questions to be able to lay that out for the House of Commons and the Canadian people.

When we talk about employment creation, employer tax credits and things of that kind which come under the minister's purview, I hope he would tell us about the cost per week. I hope he would add up the number of weeks of work and the number of weeks of training, that he would report data, and put out his press announcements in that format. It would enable all of us to understand in a common way what is involved in the minister's program. There is a great deal of difference. In a time of unemployment that is well in excess of one million people in Canada today, it makes a great deal of difference whether the government is providing work for something like 200,000 people or 7,000 people. The problem is significantly reduced if we are providing work for 200,000 people. When we are providing work for 7,000 people, it is important to those 7,000 people, their families and the people dependent upon that income. But it tells us clearly in the House of Commons that we do not have a program in place which deals with the serious unemployment problems existing in Canada today.

I want one other indication from the minister about another number that is important to me. I have asked it in a variety of ways on three separate days. I will put it in the following context. Wood Gundy, a respected organization in Canada, indicated that in the next fiscal year its projection of unemployment on average will be in excess of 9 per cent. Last month in Canada it was 7.8 per cent. Does the minister have any information from the Minister of Finance, from his own officials or from any other source, which would enable him to stand in the House at this moment and tell us that there is good reason to believe unemployment will not get to that 9 per cent level and stay there pretty much in the next 18 months? Does he have good reason to suspect that we are not looking at the most severe unemployment problem this country has ever seen, and that we are looking at it for an extended period of time, at least 18 months and maybe longer? Does the minister have good reason to tell me not to accept that forecast?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, as I told the member before, I am very reluctant to get into the art of black magic and start predicting all kinds of numbers. I would not want to claim the same degree of prescience Wood Gundy has attained in the past when it has been so accurate in its forecast of the stock market. But if the member is looking for some light at the end of the tunnel, some small glim of optimism, at least I would refer to the survey conducted by Manpower Temporary Services of Toronto. It did a very major survey of