

Newfoundland, where the unemployment rate is about 14 per cent, than in Toronto, where it is around 4 per cent. Unemployment data remind us of this reality every month. Instead of giving up when faced with this challenging situation, we should adapt the unemployment insurance scheme accessibility requirements to the true needs and specific conditions which exist in the various regions of our country.

• (1620)

Mr. Speaker, we were compelled to return the unemployment insurance scheme to its original role. As I said, the purpose of this scheme is to provide income support to working men and women who, for reasons beyond their control, find themselves without job and without income. That is our definition of the so-called "safety net". In this context, it is vital that this scheme provide incentives and that its benefit structure encourage workers to keep their jobs and return to the labour force.

In order to provide Canada with a dynamic and competitive skilled labour force, we had to make a number of difficult choices. Mr. Speaker, the improvement of job opportunities since 1984 indicates that we were right in our analysis and forecast. In short, such is our manpower development strategy, as reflected in Bill C-21.

Mr. Speaker, we must support this bill and thus promote the short, medium and long-term development of a more skilled and more productive labour force.

[English]

**Ms. Langan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make reference to the minister's comments on retraining. The problem we face is not so much one of lack of skills for the jobs available, but the lack of high skill, high wage jobs. We have one of the most skilled workforces in the world right here in Canada. What we need to do is to put it to work. We can see that while training is a necessary component to any full employment policy, it is not enough. It is absolutely vital for us to recognize that this bill redirects \$800 million from the benefit fund to the training fund. We need to look at what training is being done, who is being trained, and who is doing the training.

### *Government Orders*

The programs to date have simply prepared people for temporary unemployment, and have trained them, not for future needs but to fill short term low paying jobs. I would appreciate if the minister could comment on that.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Vézina:** Mr. Speaker, I was in the House and I listened to the long and repetitive remarks made by my learned colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence. I was reading while listening to him. In short, business people who took part in a poll deplored the shortage of skilled workers which they felt was a major impediment to the growth of small and medium-sized businesses. We are all well aware of the vital role which small and medium-sized businesses play in this country. We all know just how important it is for our labour force to adapt to new requirements, both for today and the future. A poll carried out in Canada resulted in a definite identification. Owners of small and medium-sized businesses stated: "Because there is a definite shortage of skilled workers, we are determined to work, together with the Government, toward upgrading our labour force." So are we. I agree with my hon. friend that we should work together with the private sector, together with employers and employees to identify real needs. That is what we mean by "partnership" and "consultation". We are striving to identify the needs so that we can put together adequate training programs. Having spent several years in the field of education, I am convinced that if we want to bring the unemployment rate down, we must start by training our human resources.

[English]

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, it is important today, especially after the last statement, to explode some myths about the intentions of Bill C-21.

[Translation]

Bill C-21 is not designed to provide Canadian men and women with the new and improved training programs that they need to adjust to the new economic situation.

[English]

Bill C-21 is not designed to improve the employment opportunities of those Canadians who are now toiling at the fringes of society, underpaid, undertrained and destined for increasing uncertainty and poverty in their lives. Bill C-21 is not about developing the talents and expectations of Canadians that if they work hard, try to