

Adjournment Debate

line workers, the social service educators, providers of health care, community members and also we will be looking at the child abuse area with regard to this.

The panel is going to seek three objectives. The first one is to encourage women to identify violence from their own perspective. The second one is to heighten public awareness. A lot of people are aware and then there are those who perhaps do not really know how great this issue is within the country. The third objective, of course, is to find solutions related to the root causes of the violence against women and a particular focus on preventive measures which I think we all realize is the best route to go.

It began its operations this month and it will be reporting back to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women by December 1992, including recommendations for a plan of action along with the timeframes and the federal government's action policy.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): You have only two minutes unless the House agrees to more time. The hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel.

[*Translation*]

GARMENT INDUSTRY

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, following a meeting with the Quebec Joint Committee of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, I put a question to the Minister of Labour, in this House, on May 17. Basically, I asked him to review the regulations of the POWA, that is the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, a program for workers who have been laid off and, because of their age and lack of skills, have little or no chance to find a new job. The Minister told me then he wanted to discuss the issue with his colleague, the Quebec Minister, in order to revise the regulations and find a way to better help laid-off workers, especially in the Montreal area.

Well, I read a press communique released by the Minister of Labour, announcing that assistance would be provided to about 275 older workers laid off in the Province of Quebec. Among them employees of only five businesses which had to close in the Montreal area. I would like to congratulate the Minister. Obviously, helping five people is better than helping no one at all. However, I have to remind him that, with all the various problems in the Montreal area and throughout Quebec,

helping 275 laid-off workers is really not enough. I would invite him to review the regulations as soon as possible.

In the beginning, POWA was an exclusively federal program, entirely financed by the Canadian government which could decide all by itself who would receive assistance and who would not. I do not want the Minister to tell me today that he has to consult Quebec before deciding who to help in that province. It may have been a good thing to ask the Quebec government to pay 30 per cent of the expenses.

If the federal government does not pay the entire bill, that is fine. But if it pays 70 per cent of it, it should be able to make the appropriate decisions in order to ensure that a much greater number of Quebecers and especially Montrealers who are now unemployed benefit from this program. Finally, should I remind the minister of an article signed by Jean-Philippe Décarie in today's edition of the *Journal de Montréal*, which reads as follows: "Nobody gives a damn about Montreal. The Montreal area, which goes from one disaster to another, found out once again yesterday that it has no political weight in Ottawa to protect its industrial assets and its labour force, even if it is highly qualified."

I hope the minister read that article and I hope he is able to announce measures in order to help those ex-employees, the 2,000 employees from Vickers, from Canadian Steel Foundries, from Chem-Tech. I hope he does something about the 15,000 jobs or so that were lost during the last year in the textile industry, particularly in the northern part of Montreal. We must help not only those 275 persons, but the 20,000 who lost their jobs because the Tory government does not have any progressive policies.

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as a former Labour minister, the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel knows that POWA, the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, is a last resort program designed to assist older workers who have been permanently laid off and have no prospects for re-employment.

Lay-offs in private industry and commercial Crown corporations are considered under POWA.

The hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel raised a question concerning the coverage under POWA of workers laid off due to plant closures in the Montreal region. Under POWA we have been able to help many older workers who would otherwise suffer severe financial hardship.