

*Government Orders*

and the provisions of the unemployment insurance system, attending talks on the technical aspects and analyzing statistics. During the past two months, the legislative committee spent four very busy weeks collecting evidence and listening to the views of Canadians across the country.

[English]

This bill was subjected to the scrutiny of a large number of people. It was applauded and it was criticized from a wide range of perspectives. The range and diversity of viewpoints reassure me that we have developed a bill that contains just about the right degree of reform.

Prior to introducing the bill in the House, the government had spent a lot of time and energy designing the labour force development strategy and drafting Bill C-21. To assist us in our work, we had the recommendations on labour market adjustment measures and income supporter arrangements from the Macdonald commission, the Forget inquiry, the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, and the de Grandpré advisory council.

A great deal of study and reflection has gone into these issues in recent years months. It is now time to get on with the passing of Bill C-21 and implementing the results.

[Translation]

The fact that we wanted to pass this legislation and implement its provisions and all the components of the labour force development strategy as soon as possible does not mean that we ignored the critics of this Bill. In this respect, I must say I appreciate the diligence and sense of commitment of the legislative committee, and I would like to thank all its members for accomplishing a difficult task. Thanks to their efforts and those of many Canadians who took the trouble to appear before the committee, we have made a number of major changes in the Bill.

[English]

One of the criticisms, raised a number of times, dealt with the proposal to increase penalties for those who left

their jobs voluntarily for no just cause and simply chose not to work. Witnesses who appeared before the legislative committee expressed concerns about the definition of "just cause" and the process for deciding whether a cause is legitimate and is just. Women's groups, in particular, spoke of the problems women face in identifying sexual harassment as a reason for quitting their jobs.

• (1140)

It has been and will continue to be our policy, as a government, to regard sexual harassment as reason for leaving a job. But in response to the concerns expressed, we amended the bill to include a definition of "just cause" for greater certainty. This definition specifies that, among others, sexual harassment is indeed a just cause for leaving a job. It has been worded carefully so as not to result in any loss of flexibility, or in any narrowing of interpretation. At the same time, it provides legislative expression to the protection that women and other UI recipients deserve.

We also listened to hon. members and to the many Canadians who raised objections to the duration of benefits for adoptive parents. I certainly understood their concerns, and we attempted to deal with those with considerable sympathy. I am very pleased, as a result, that the House approved the amendment that we drafted. It will meet the needs of the majority of adoptive parents in a way that conforms with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I also want to draw the attention of the House to two other amendments, first proposed by the hon. member for Ottawa West, and accepted unanimously by the legislative committee. One of the member's amendments will ensure that disabled persons have access to training by providing them with the special facilitative devices they need in order to participate in classroom courses or other activities.

The hon. member's second amendment concerned UI recipients who are offered developmental opportunities, specifically the capitalization of their benefits to establish themselves in self-employment or to move to another location. The amendment will guarantee that these individuals are informed of how this choice may affect their future eligibility for benefits.