

Oral Questions

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, very shortly I will be meeting with my provincial counterparts. We will be discussing the new program and the benefits that it has for the provinces. I would remind the Hon. Member of the additional funding that we have put into this program for social assistance recipients. It has been a very successful program that was introduced by the Government, and it is going to be expanded from \$600 million to \$800 million, if we get the full funding on the provincial side.

There will not be an increase in the welfare rolls as a result of this program.

ASSISTANCE TO PROVINCES

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Premier of Nova Scotia states that there will be an increase in the welfare rolls as a result of this program. One cannot take \$800 million out of unemployment insurance without cutting the coverage, and that is what the Minister is doing.

We are not opposed to putting people back to work. We are opposed to cutting programs which take away the right of people to pay for their food and rent.

I want to ask the Government, especially the Prime Minister because he is responsible for over-all policy, how are the provinces going to pay for this additional welfare? Will the Prime Minister offer additional moneys to the provinces to take up the burden that he is shifting to them?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is totally ignoring the fact that the social assistance recipient program that we have funded in the past has taken people off the welfare rolls. There are fewer people living in poverty today than there were when this Government took office, there is more training for people today, and there are more jobs for people today.

Let me remind the Hon. Member of what the parliamentary committee, of which the Hon. Member was a member, has stated.

Mr. Allmand: Talk to the Premier of Nova Scotia about it, Barbara.

Mrs. McDougall: It stated "That Section 39 (Training) of the Unemployment Insurance Act be amended and alternate provisions be made to more clearly assist claimants to use their benefits to develop suitable skills". "Unemployment insurance can be more than just earnings replacement while unemployed. It should be a vehicle to help people realize better and more stable employment opportunities in the future".

That is exactly what the Hon. Member signed, Mr. Speaker.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FREEZE IN FUNDING OF PROGRAMS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, today members of the Government have stated that the stories about regional development cuts are false. They stated that the regional development help is more comprehensive than that from any Government in the past.

If this is so, why has the Government frozen almost \$1 billion-worth of renegotiations of economic and regional development agreements with provinces from the East Coast to the West Coast to the Arctic?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech there are comments indicating the commitment of the Government to regional development as evidenced by the Western Economic Development Office, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the expansion and continuation of regional development programs of FED-NOR and the Quebec programs through my Department.

In the Prime Minister's comments during the Throne Speech debate he again indicated the Government's commitment to co-operative regional development efforts.

The statements made by the Government are there. They stand on their own. I do not know why the Hon. Member won't take them as given.

Mr. Langdon: Because, Mr. Speaker, I have been here for the last four years and I have seen statements like that turned upside down by the Government within months.