

Government Orders

This group was set up in January 1992 with the Fibreworld plant committee. Seventy-five workers had been laid off when the plant closed.

• (1630)

These people have assessed the workers' needs. Some have gone back to school to complete grade 12. Fifteen took a course in heating and cooling systems at the Cité collégiale, in Hawkesbury. These people have managed to find new jobs. That is the kind of thing we should be doing as a government: training people.

Mr. Hudon: That is what we are doing.

Mr. Boudria: I heard opposite, my hon. colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry, say: "That is what we are doing".

[*English*]

I want to bring a case to your attention, Mr. Speaker. I have in my constituency, like all others here, small business development centres. They administer the self-employment assistance program of the government. That is a program by which unemployed workers can convert their unemployment benefits to start up a form of small business and in that way gain meaningful employment.

Let me describe what goes on. The Cornwall office of Employment Canada administers this program for Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Prescott counties plus the city of Cornwall. This year it got \$200,000 to administer this program.

That might sound like a lot of money. Two hundred thousand dollars is a lot more than I have and a lot more than many of my constituents have, but the \$200,000 does not even cover those contracts which are already signed for this year. In other words, we cannot put any new people on the program and those who are already approved might not even get the funds that were approved for them. That is how bad it is.

A constituent phoned me today. She wants to start a marketing and distribution system for goat milk in the riding. It has been approved. A complete business plan has been approved and everything. This is going to work. Everyone has agreed it is going to work. Everyone agrees this person qualifies, but the government, after having approved her for the program, said: "Well, you know the

money that we said we would give you when we approved this, well, we are not going to give it to you because we do not have the money that we said we would give you". That is not a very honest way for the government to proceed. That is just one example.

A lady in Apple Hill in my riding, a constituent, phoned me this morning in desperation, trying to get this government to advance the funding under that program. Why is it not there? Why is that not what the government is talking about today in the House of Commons, all these people who are trying to find ways to get back to work using government programs that have already been announced and approved and they still cannot get them? Why?

Are we talking about putting more funds in the self-employment assistance program? I am right now, but not the government across the way. What it is concentrating on is stopping these alleged cheaters.

Government members say that those who leave their job with so-called just cause will continue to receive benefits. Any member who has ever defended an unemployment insurance case knows better and knows that by the time you can win one of these cases, and that is just winning it at the local level of Employment Canada, the case is often four or five months old. Anyone who has ever appealed one of those to the courts, to the umpire, who is a really a judge of the Federal Court, will know that it sometimes takes a year.

What point is it to tell someone a year later, possibly when they are bankrupt or have been on welfare for a long time, that the adjudication of their case a year ago was wrong. Big deal.

What about the ones involving sexual harassment and so on? They go before the Canadian Human Rights Commission. We know how much of a hurry it is in. These people take forever to even return a phone call from an MP, let alone adjudicate on one of the cases. They just do not give answers. I am sorry to speak disrespectfully of employees of a quasi-judicial body, but maybe if they were even so kind as to return phone calls every now and then I would have a bit more respect for them. In any case, when they do adjudicate, two years or two and a half years later, the discussion and the adjudication is academic.