

Oral Questions

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. Those programs are doing nothing today for the 12,000 young people without work.

[*Translation*]

The minister tells us these policies and programs will deal with the situation. That is just not true and he knows it. Why is there so much unemployment in Manitoba? Fifty-five per cent of the unemployed are young people. Why is there so much poverty in Manitoba which has the highest youth poverty rate in Canada? Why do so many people go to food banks in Manitoba? I am told this year there will be over 100,000. What is the government going to do now, to put these people back to work?

[*English*]

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the hon. member minimizes the training and retraining. Just a few moments ago his colleague from Hamilton East said that what young people needed was training and retraining.

Mr. Duhamel: Yes, and I wish you would do it.

Mr. McDermid: They cannot have it both ways over there on the Liberal benches although they try to.

We feel training and retraining are the most important elements to get young people trained and back into the work force in meaningful high-tech jobs. We are doing it and it is paying benefits. We have seen employment rise every month over the last 11 months and we expect it to continue that way.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. The North American Free Trade Agreement provides for environmental protection measures unequalled in any other trade agreement in force today. NAFTA protects our right to establish and enforce our own strict environmental standards.

Could the minister explain his position on this side agreement on the environment with Mexico and the

Americans and tell us why he is not proceeding with amendments to the Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States?

• (1450)

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Department of the Environment, which I have the privilege of heading, was directly involved in the discussions on the North American Free Trade Agreement. In fact, the agreement that came out of the negotiations is probably the greenest free trade agreement in existence today. It contains a commitment by the countries to sustainable development which constitutes a precedent, especially after the Earth Summit in Rio, and it also contains a commitment by each country to set standards they deem appropriate, as well as a commitment not to relax standards, legislation or regulations for the purpose of attracting investment.

Even more significant is a commitment in the agreement or, should I say, parallel to it, to create a North American commission on the environment. The parties are now discussing the mandate of such a commission, and I hope we will be able to finalize the Free Trade Agreement as such so that we can have a continental approach to the environment.

* * *

[*English*]

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of the Environment.

The minister will know that there was an environmental assessment review on the expansion of the Lester B. Pearson airport in Toronto. The minister will also know that the Minister of Transport has totally disregarded this environmental assessment review in the expansion of that airport.

Will the minister direct that the environmental review process be followed and that the environmental review process mean something in the expansion of government work?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member's conclusions on whether or not the recommendations have been followed.