

labour force, and two other forms of extension based on the national unemployment rate or the regional rate.

All these features were built-in in order to get away from the strict and rigid relationship of a one week of benefits to two weeks of work. The present act is built entirely on the relationship that if a person has worked two weeks he is entitled to one. This, of course, favours people who work for a long time. For people who have a very small attachment, who find themselves in a region where things are more difficult, it is purely arbitrary and there is no real logic behind it. The new formulae were built into the act to recognize that, as much as possible, benefits should be adjusted or tailored to meet the case of the individual when faced with unemployment. The package therefore includes various elements of time at work difficulties of finding work and so on.

During these periods of unemployment we propose under the bill to have a claimant assistance service, which will be a new method of reaching out to the unemployed and trying to direct him to other services of federal, provincial or municipal levels of government, or even private agencies. Clause 106 of the bill refers to this feature. Therefore, in addition to having the benefits, which are tailored to meet particular situations, we have included features which will permit directing people and helping them along the way while they are unemployed.

These are the main features of the benefit structure, going through it very rapidly. If you want discussion at this point, I will try to answer questions, otherwise I will continue with maternity and sickness.

**Senator Smith:** Before you leave this point, I was quite interested in your comments on the claimant assistance technique. Where will these officers be who will be functioning in that set-up, the claimant assistance technique?

**Mr. DesRoches:** They will be located at approximately 129 points across the country. I am reluctant to use the word "office", but I think the concept of the office we are now going to use is based more on a service to the public than a record-keeping type of office. On that basis we are extending our locations. We now have about 60 or 65 permanent locations; we will have 108 permanent locations in future. In addition, we will have about 67 temporary locations, where people will be serviced two or three days a week, depending on the circumstances.

**Senator Smith:** I was thinking of my own province of Nova Scotia, where there has been a set-up whereby people from the commission spent a couple of days at the end of, say, the lobster season in order to process the claims, which has been of great assistance. Would the offices from which these people would work be close to the locations where the Manpower offices now are?

**Mr. DesRoches:** We hope so. We are working in that direction. We will not have as many offices as Manpower, but we now have plans—and we have done this quite deliberately—with the Department of Manpower to locate together in the same building where this is feasible. This is the new trend, if you like, that wherever we open these service centres we will try to locate as closely as possible, if space is available and so on.

**Senator Smith:** Will this also mean the end of the sort of informal set-up, which is provided by people who make a study of the thing and assist in making out claims, where there is no unemployment insurance office?

**Mr. DesRoches:** No, we will still do that.

**Senator Smith:** You will still keep that?

**Mr. DesRoches:** Yes, we will still do that.

**Senator Smith:** That has been a very valuable function.

**Mr. DesRoches:** We certainly do this on, say, mass lay-offs. We would still go out to the plant and try to anticipate the flow of claims where there is a particular situation in the industry. Indeed, this should not prevent but rather accelerate this type of service, where people go out to the work place and try to work out the relationship.

**Senator Smith:** I am thinking of some of the small towns where there is no unemployment insurance office. In the past there have been people appointed to serve the unemployed who want to make claims and have difficulty with them; they cannot do it by mail. I think it has been quite useful. Will these people continue on?

**Mr. DesRoches:** Yes. There are 261 of those. These are agents, and they will continue. They have multiplied in the last few years. They provide a useful link for us, and I think a useful link for the people in filling out the forms.

**Senator Smith:** I think they do.

**Mr. DesRoches:** By the way, as part of our staff training to carry out the provisions of the new bill we are training these agents as well to cope with the new forms.

**The Acting Chairman:** I should like to follow up on Senator Smith's line of questioning. In my province of Newfoundland, we have many outlying communities where there are very slow mail connections, and it takes them a week, sometimes two weeks in the winter, to get a claim into the office. I understand that several years ago the set-up was changed so that these claims were processed in Moncton; the data on the claim had to be sent to Moncton for processing and then come all the way back to St. John's and then out again to the outlying places. Many people complained about this; they thought this was a pretty slow process. It meant some of them would be perhaps a month, sometimes six to eight weeks, before they could get any benefit. In the meantime, of course, they were on welfare, which eventually had to be paid back, which created a hardship at the time. All this was because of the slowness. Is there any change in that type of set-up?

**Mr. DesRoches:** There is no real change in that, but I would like to clarify a point here. There have always been five points in the country where we have maintained records, because of the lengthy base period involved, and where we must refer each claim to determine what record of contribution the man has had. This has always existed, the reference in the Maritimes is to Moncton. In other places it would be Winnipeg or Van-