

Oral Questions

concerned about their situation. The fact is that we increased our budgets. At a time when fiscal responsibility is paramount, we still increased all funding used to help these people. I fail to see why the hon. member thinks he can improve their situation by shouting that we have done nothing at all, although program effectiveness and program funding have both increased. I suppose we could also do what the Liberals did. We could keep raising taxes or increase the deficit.

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I too have a question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a question about the statement of the Conservative member for Halifax West in the press and I quote: "One of the things you learn in elections is not to bother with welfare houses". The Leader of the Opposition invited the minister to reject that statement and he did not do so.

I ask the minister, will he reject the statement right now, or does his silence mean that he and his government agree with his colleague and are writing off the poor and unemployed in this country?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, if rejecting a statement by a member of Parliament or interpreting silence as a kiss-off, then the Liberals are guilty of a lot of things in this country.

The question is simply, what efforts are being devoted by this government to try to help the unemployed? We have increased the spending under the Department of Employment and Immigration by \$300 million this year to try to address that tough situation.

Canada is subjected to this recession. Canada is subjected to restructuring that is taking place in this global economy. The private sector has to answer this challenge with the help of government. It does not want us to substitute and do it for them. The tools have to be in place and that is what we are trying to do.

Talking about education and training, Canada is spending \$11 billion a year. When looking at the books that is

more than last year and the year before but the Liberals will still claim that it is less.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I return again to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and invite him and ask him to reject the callous words of his colleague the Conservative member for Halifax West who said: "One of the things you learn in elections is not to bother with welfare houses". Does he not realize that by remaining silent he is confirming that this is the view of his government?

I ask the minister to speak up and reject these callous words or stand condemned of rejecting the more than 1.5 million unemployed people in this country.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, if the hon. member, who is an experienced member of Parliament, wants to know whether it is the policy of this government not to care about people on welfare and about housing, no, it is not. It is quite to the contrary and the record clearly shows that.

I was not there. I do not know what the member said, but I know that member. I think the member for Halifax West is just as concerned about poor people and people in need than any Liberal in this House. Therefore, do not try to make the member for Halifax West out to be an uncaring member of Parliament. Of course, he is not a Liberal. He does not have a corner on everything, but I think he is a hard working member for his people.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, this week the anti-poverty critic for the New Democratic Party, the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, released the action plan on behalf of the New Democratic Party entitled "Changing Course". In that document we made 38 recommendations on how this government can reverse some of the effects of its economic policies.

I would like to say to the Minister of Finance that while the official unemployment rate in Canada is 11 per cent, the Canadian Mental Health Association in its report outlining not only the effects of unemployment in financial terms but also the traumatic psychological effects points out that the real unemployment rate is 19 per cent.