

Later in that response, the minister said: "When we know later in the year exactly what the effects are, other programs if necessary will be put into place".

My hopes were still up on February 21. On March 17, having heard nothing from either of the ministers involved, I then went on the offensive again and spoke in this House for four minutes on the necessity, the pressing need for compensation for those involved.

I discussed the life of a plant worker, a fisherman, and an operator. I talked about the kind of salaries that we were looking at and the difficulty they were experiencing then, one month into the lack of compensation. These are people who last year were employed or were covered by unemployment insurance, or were covered by an emergency response program.

This year because the plant closed earlier with very little notice, they had only two or three weeks of work. Through no fault of their own, they could not qualify. As of February 21 they were using their savings, capitalizing on what food they had stored—a roast of moose, some saltfish—and that was one month into the desolate situation that I am describing.

Now, a processing plant operator does not make a lot of money. The average income in my riding is \$23,000. That was the latest figure I had. The average in Newfoundland is \$32,000 and the average in Canada is \$46,000. These workers make anywhere from, depending on their seniority and the kind of bonuses they get, \$17,000 to \$23,000 a year. If my research serves me correctly, that is pretty close to the poverty level in Canada. So you do not start out with very much. If you have to go on unemployment insurance, if you are covered by unemployment insurance, your income can range from \$14,000 a year to \$19,000 a year. That still is not a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, as you know.

In this case, at one month—where I left you in my presentation in the House—these people had no compensation, no visible source of income.

The next date I want to bring to your attention is April 27. In the meantime I have met with officials. On March 16 I met with the director general of unemployment insurance, or the regional director in St. John's for employment and immigration, and I discussed this problem with him to see what solutions may be forthcoming, along with other problems of course. On April 27 I found

it necessary, because I had no response from the government, to make another statement in the House of Commons in this regard. In the meantime I wrote to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I have yet to receive a reply.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, if you can follow the chronology, on April 27 at about that time, I was in my riding and I visited some of the families and spoke with some of the people involved, and actually went and ate, had meals, with some of the families. I do not think they would be ashamed because of the circumstances which caused me to rise to my feet and talk in public about this for me to tell you that they get up in the morning and they have no jobs to go to. Their breakfast is a cup of coffee, a cup of tea, in some cases maybe a glass of cold water, home made bread made from purchased flour, ingredients that are still within some range or left over from the days when they had work, sometimes without butter, some partridge berry jam that was picked the year before. Their kids go to school, they come home for lunch and it may be bread, maybe butter, maybe a can of beans put on the stove and boiled, shared with the family. The kids go back to school, they come back from school and for supper, maybe there is some meat left over. There may be some more canned food left. This is one day into the second month of this situation that I am trying to put a human face on.

In the second month their pickups are being repossessed, their cars are being repossessed. They are not brand-new cars. They are not big cars. In some cases they are 10, 12 years old, but they still have payments to make because they cannot afford to pay cash for these vehicles.

I am asking the government to put a human face on these families which need compensation because of a management decision, albeit necessary, by the government of the day, which happens to be on that side of the House. On May 8, which was not too long ago, I found it necessary two and a half months into this difficult situation to ask the Minister of Employment and Immigration about this. Although he was not here at the time, I was pleased that he was represented by the Minister of State for Employment and Immigration. I was beginning to take some hope from the sympathetic look and response she started to give, but I lost hope when she said: