

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister of employment.

In the weekend papers, Quebecers found a full-page ad, taken out by the minister of employment and paid for by taxpayers concerning the proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act.

How can the minister reconcile changes that are supposed to reduce the deficit with spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to sell those Draconian changes? If, as he just said in response to a question from my leader, Bill C-105 is supported by Canadians, why is he buying advertising space to sell it to the public?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, if the people opposed to these changes would explain what Bill C-105 really does, if they would stop using the bill to scare people and tell them the truth, we would not have to deal with the kind of allegations that were made by the FTQ of Quebec, for instance, which said that people who quit jobs because of union activities will not be protected, although that protection is right there in the act.

If they want to keep up this misinformation campaign, I am afraid we will have to tell Canadians the truth, because that is what they want.

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, last night on the CBC, the minister said he wanted to get at the people who choose to be unemployed.

To shed some light on this question, is the minister prepared to table in the House information on the number of people who would leave their jobs with the prospect of not receiving any income at all—remember that—for three months? Are there really people who would willingly go without an income for three months? Is he prepared to table the data and tell us as well how many of these people would not qualify under the 40 grounds he listed in his ad on the weekend?

Is he prepared to give the House and Canadians that information?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, out of four million claimants under the Unemployment Insurance Program last year the vast majority obtained their benefits within a reasonable timeframe, about 30 days.

When there is a dispute about the reason for termination of employment, certain procedures are to be followed. The alternative is that if we are going to pay benefits to people just because they apply for them, the system will no longer be manageable.

I have already made it clear to the House that I was prepared to see how we could address these problems as expeditiously as possible when there is a conflict between what the employer says and what the employee says. My department does this every day.

**Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau):** Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, more than 45,000 Quebecers said no to Bill C-105 in Montreal. There is unanimity outside the House, and I may remind you that yesterday, more than 45,000 people were asking for the outright withdrawal of Bill C-105.

My question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration is this: Will he listen to the people who are his responsibility and withdraw Bill C-105?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. member and others on his side of the House, many members from all parts of the country, especially from Quebec, told me about the concerns of their constituents regarding these changes. We are now looking at ways to make sure that the provisions of Bill C-105 will be implemented fairly, equitably and reasonably.

I have received some good suggestions from my caucus. I am still waiting to hear from the New Democrats. I imagine it will take some time, because their good ideas tend to be few and far between.

**Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau):** Mr. Speaker, the best advice I could give the minister would be to withdraw the bill.