

*Adjournment Debate*

I had visited the community the week before that, and the reports were that it would take seven or eight weeks for the benefits to be paid because of the backlog with hundreds of thousands of people receiving UIC benefits in the province of Ontario.

I have received some assurance from the minister, but I would like to have the parliamentary secretary reaffirm that those benefits will start to flow during the fourth week from the time of the lay-off. It is essential that these miners receive benefits a lot sooner than the seventh week as was projected.

The second area concerns the funding for job training, retraining, and upgrading of workers. There was a budget last year of approximately \$6 million. A program was put before the minister's department several months ago for a new budget under the Community Futures Program for manpower retraining, for job search, and for community adjustment as well as industrial adjustment activities within the community. We are still awaiting a decision with regard to that Community Futures budget. It is the East Algoma Community Initiatives Incorporated group that carry it out, but the funding for those workers comes from the Community Futures Program budget.

Those are some of the concerns that are weighing heavily on this community, whether the government is going to provide those funds for retraining and upgrading. At the present time, we have something like 500 people in pre-vocational training and upgrading and 200 in technical.

• (1805 )

The additional lay-offs and uncertainty being created will require many more dollars this year for training. As well there will be another 500 people who were receiving UIC before this current lay-off. We really end up with something like 700 people in training programs and around 1,500 receiving UIC during this six-week period. I assume that will be repeated this summer, in July and August, when there will be a seven-week lay-off.

That brings to the fore the other requests and demands I am making of the minister, that we be provided with additional assistance at the Elliot Lake Canada Employment Commission Centre. That centre, with an ongoing staff since the lay-offs last year of about 17 people, is simply not capable of coping with all the counselling problems or the management of 2,200 peo-

ple in training, on UI, or in upgrading courses. I am hopeful that the government will move to provide an additional five people at the Canada Employment Centre in Elliot Lake to cope with the massive load required during this coming calendar year and in the year ahead.

There are many other initiatives the government needs to move on such as funding for the Retirement Living Program, the decentralization of government offices to the community, as well as a number of initiatives being put forward by the province. However, these with regard to manpower are urgent and need to be resolved. We need to have reassurance that the government is going to support, encourage and assist the community in this the most difficult time almost in its history.

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the initiatives the government has taken to help laid off workers in Elliot Lake.

Most recently, Employment and Immigration Canada has responded to the latest lay-offs at Elliot Lake by making arrangements with the employer to facilitate the preparation of records of employment and to assist the affected workers in filing their claims for unemployment insurance benefits in Elliot Lake.

Over 900 claims were filed on March 15 and another 100 were filed on March 22. It is expected that the claims will be processed promptly as the Sudbury Canada Employment Centre will assist the Canada Employment Centre in Sault Ste. Marie.

It is anticipated that the claimants will receive their first reporting cards within the next week or two, and should receive their benefits within the normal four to five week period after filing and not eight weeks, as the hon. member has indicated.

In addition to financial assistance through the unemployment insurance system, Employment and Immigration is ensuring that laid off employees have access to the full range of employment and training programs.

First, our industrial adjustment service committee in Elliot Lake is working with Denison Mines and Rio Algom Ltd. Management and the United Steelworkers Union concerning lay-offs this year and last.