

*Government Orders*

Within this single department are all the programs and services that help people looking for work find and keep jobs, help employers find workers they need, help workers and employers under federal jurisdiction to maintain fair labour standards and a safe working environment, help people between jobs, Canadian seniors, families with low incomes and people with disabilities to get the income support they need.

It will help people get training and develop new skills for a changing economy. As well, it will help local businesses, communities and entire industries to target the skills for the future and build a skilled workforce that will help Canada be competitive and prosperous in a changing world.

By bringing all of these different programs into one department, we have taken an important first step toward ensuring programs work together, providing meaningful, co-ordinated solutions for the real world.

By taking this step the government has helped set the stage for real integration in the way programs and services are delivered to Canadians. Let us face it, when people come looking for service, they could care less which program branch delivers that service. The last thing they need is to be sent running around from one office to another.

One of the most fundamental goals of the government's approach is to ensure that integration takes place at the local level. To do so we must focus on locating the decision making and design of services at the local level. Instead of highly centralized decision making, we need to allow a much greater degree of discretion and judgment in the field.

Having been in the field of psychiatry and mental health for 30 years, I know what it means to tailor programs to individuals; it is very important and this bill accomplishes that.

Over the last two years I have developed a close working relationship with the Canada Employment Centre in my riding of Annapolis Valley—Hants. I have had many opportunities to meet with the employees, listen to their ideas and watch these professionals do their jobs. I am convinced more than ever that decision making power must rest with the local level.

Decisions about what kinds of programs make sense in a community should be made by the community, in partnership with local businesses, trade unions, community and municipal organizations. If it is going to work we have to completely rethink the way we define programs and services.

• (1015)

As my hon. colleague from Burin—St. George's stated, we cannot say to communities across Canada: "Here is a program and here are all the rules you have to follow. Do it our way or not at all". He also went on to say that individuals need programs

and even though it is not what they need, this is the only program we have money for so take it or leave it.

Instead, we want to say to communities and individuals: "Here are some basic tools that we know have worked. Here is the money and the available resources. Now you the client decide which tools make sense and how you can use these resources most effectively". Just do what needs to be done. That is the motto of this bill.

That is what integration means, bringing it down to the local level. That is what we are trying to do with Bill C-96. The government is also bringing this approach to the largest single social program in Canada, unemployment insurance.

For years now, we have had two separate tracks going for people who are unemployed. On the one hand there is the UI system, an absolutely vital program providing temporary income support for people between jobs. On the other hand we have developed an increasingly sophisticated and effective set of employment programs, a set of tools to help people develop new skills, gain work experience and in the end find jobs.

Our challenge in this bill is to integrate these two components, to build a single integrated employment service that people can turn to, not just for a cheque but for help to get back into the workforce. This means finding a way to combine that essential system of income protection provided by UI with an active system of employment, a system that gives people the resources and the opportunity to make choices about the kind of skills that are required, the kind of future they want to build for themselves.

For example, we are experimenting with a form of internship with small businesses. There are companies that desperately want to hire new workers but cannot afford to provide the training new workers require. With this program we help them hire young people, older workers and women returning to the workforce. We provide some support to pay for the learning curve, the time it obviously takes for new workers to become fully productive in their new jobs. The experiment is getting good results. Small businesses are creating jobs for unemployed Canadians, real permanent jobs.

Over the past year we have developed a program for self-employment under unemployment insurance. We want to give people a choice. Rather than simply collecting benefits while they look for a new job, we want to give people the opportunity to create their own jobs. The department provides some financial support, monitoring and counselling to help participants get their businesses started.

Over the past year 30,000 people have started their own businesses this way through the unemployment insurance system. They have not created just 30,000 jobs but rather 60,000