

*Unemployment Insurance Office Conditions*  
[English]

**SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B),  
1969-70**

A Message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (B) for the financial year ending March 31, 1970, was presented by Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board) and read by Mr. Speaker to the House.

[Later:]

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
MISCELLANEOUS ESTIMATES

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by Mr. Drury, pursuant to Standing Order 59:

That, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order (58)15, the Supplementary Estimates B for the year ending March 31, 1970, tabled in the House this day, be referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

STATEMENT ON CONDITIONS IN TORONTO  
OFFICE

**Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour):** On Monday, Mr. Speaker, at the suggestion of the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings and the hon. member for Greenwood, I agreed to make a statement in the House today to ascertain whether or not there was any delay in the servicing of unemployment insurance claims in the Toronto area. The hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings mentioned that such a delay would be due to the rapid rise in unemployment in Metropolitan Toronto, while the hon. member for Greenwood was concerned about the long delays and queues which have accumulated in the Toronto office. He suggested special measures including a larger staff and more interpreters.

The answer, as supplied to me by the Unemployment Insurance Commission, is very detailed and very lengthy, and in view of the fact that the estimates of the Unemployment Insurance Commission will be before the appropriate committee in a very short time I would like to reserve this lengthy statement until that time. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to both hon. gentlemen that I touch briefly on some of the contents of this statement.

The Unemployment Insurance Commission points out that the volume of payment of [Mr. Caouette.]

unemployment insurance tends to increase during the winter months because of seasonal lay-offs in various industries. As the pattern is a repeating one, the Unemployment Insurance Commission plans its workload accordingly and it is wrong to imply that increased workloads in winter are unforeseen and unplanned. Since January, 1970, the increase in new claims over the comparable months last year was under 700. The active claims increased by a little more than 8,000. In anticipation of this increased work load the Unemployment Insurance Commission increased its normal complement of 330 regular employees by 130 seasonal employees. This is approximately 50 more than last year.

The hon. member for Greenwood pointed out the inconvenience and the hardship of queues in long lines at the UIC office. In order to reduce these long line-ups the UIC recently added a telephone service in order to avoid the necessity of people coming to the office, sometimes at great inconvenience to these people. There are at present 16 telephone lines to handle incoming calls only and an additional 10 lines to handle outgoing inquiry calls. There are also 80 other telephones in the Toronto office. It may be useful to note that the total inquiries by telephone and in person are in fact lower this January than a year ago.

In the case of the line-ups, members may recall that before the UIC introduced service by mail the larger Toronto offices would handle 6,000 to 7,000 personal callers per day necessitating line-ups that extended out onto the street and around the corner. Now, under the postal system, calls to the office number 500 to 600 on peak days, or approximately 70 to 80 per hour. Last week when a press photographer called at the office to take a picture of people waiting in line, he left without photographs because there were fewer than ten people waiting in line, and he felt that this did not dramatize it in the way intended.

The necessary forms that must be completed by claimants have been greatly improved and more than half the questions on the forms are questions related to identification of the claimant. Furthermore, the commission has recently revised a great number of form letters in order that the language be made less technical and more easily understandable to everyone.

Most inquiries arise because claimants fail to qualify because of insufficient contributions