

Supply

A young constituent came to me just last week. She is working in accounting. The employer very subtly is just adding on a number of hours. She is being asked to work in the evening. She is being asked to work Saturdays. She is now putting in 70 and more hours per week. She is at the stage where she wants to leave. If she does not, she may have a mental breakdown or something, the stress is so high. There is no union that will guarantee her time and a half after 40 hours. Here is a person is being forced to leave by the employer, a good worker, but she is afraid now that she will not be covered.

The minister did give us the five categories. I looked at the five categories and this person would not fall into any one of those five categories.

I wonder if the hon. member for Timmins—Chapleau sees a category that would cover this constituent who really is being harassed and persecuted by an employer, really has to leave and she will leave without any UI compensation.

Mr. Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. He is absolutely right. As we have pointed out time and time again, this is the case. One has to prove just cause.

The five conditions the minister outlined do not cover that particular case. It is going to be left up to the discretion of the counsellors when the employee applies for unemployment insurance. Those counsellors in some cases are working under a lot of stress. They are working long hours. They are trying to do their best. They have legislation. They have thousands of workers that they interview over the period of a year. They will not be able to cope. As the minister tried to indicate, they are going to give them training to cope with these situations. They are going to try to help them. It is not going to work. The people are overworked. They need more help. They need a break. They need some assistance in the legislation. They need some flexibility.

I can bring you cases, Mr. Speaker. If you want cases, I will give you cases, case after case after case, and you can settle it.

I am offering this to the minister: put your money where your mouth is. Help these people. Give some legislation. Give a break to the workers to help them. Do not sit there and try to convince us that they will be able to appeal, they will go through the system and they will qualify simply because they are trying to improve their lot in life and that will be covered under the UI bill. I am sorry, write it down. Put it in this legislation and then I

will believe it, when it is written down. Until then, no deal.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of talk in the House today about how the unemployed will have a process of appeal. We heard a minister in the government defending her government's insidious attack on women and on minorities by saying if you are sexually harassed, you can lay a complaint.

They can go through the process. They can add their names to the list of 191,000 people who have already appealed under the unemployment insurance changes passed by this government only three years ago. The reality is that employees who are sexually harassed on the job often do not dare to put their careers and their futures on the line by laying a complaint.

I have a very good friend who was sexually harassed on the job. She worked for a very large multinational company in a senior position and was sexually harassed on the job on a daily basis. She went to the president of the company to lay a complaint, having documented with human resources all of the elements of harassment: including four-letter words on a regular basis, bum patting, et cetera.

When she went through the process and went to the president of her company she was told point blank: "This man is a good worker for our company. He produces and I am sorry but there is nothing I can do". That woman is now working for a different company. Her boss, who sexually harassed her on a daily basis, is still working for that company.

People might ask: Why did she not go and lay a complaint, which she had every right to do? The reason she did not lay a complaint is the same reason that there are probably women employed by members of Parliament who do not always lay complaints. They fear for their careers and want to avoid being labelled as whiners and complainers.

[Translation]

An hon. member: That's true.

Ms. Copps: That is what we are up against. I do not know if any men here in the House have suffered sexual harassment, but I am sure that most of the women would be able to describe specific incidents. One thing is certain. It is easy to say go ahead, lay charges and go to court, but there is no guarantee, first of all, that they will believe you. Second, if you are trying to make a career for yourself, do you want to have a reputation as a complainer?