

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. McDermid:** Statistics Canada confirmed what most Canadians were already tragically aware of, that the unemployment picture is worse than the government has been announcing. Taking into account the 410,000 hidden unemployed, the unemployment rate stands now at 13 per cent. When the Prime Minister took office 14 years ago, the unemployment rate was 4.5 per cent. The minister announced that he plans to import 20,000 to 25,000 skilled workers to meet a perceived demand. Can the minister tell this House whether he intends to adjust the 20,000 to 25,000 figure considering those figures represent estimates given to him last July based on megaprojects proceeding, which have not; a 7 per cent unemployment rate, which is completely false, and do not take into account the hundreds of thousands of unemployed skilled and unskilled Canadian workers?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has previously asked this question. In fact he asked it two weeks ago during a hearing of the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration. I will take the time to repeat the answer we gave to him at that time. We said that the number of skilled workers was determined after fairly extensive consultations across Canada with employers, unions, and provincial governments. We tabled those numbers in the House, and we are constantly adjusting them.

I pointed out to the hon. member at that time, and I suppose I should repeat what I said, that we already adjusted the figures substantially last December when we put a major restraint on skilled workers coming into Canada to the mining industry, the construction industry and in 24 categories of the manufacturing industry. A major adjustment has, therefore, already been made. We will continue to monitor the situation as part of our over-all employment strategy. That is the answer we gave to the hon. member at that time. The situation has now changed, which shows we are making sure that our immigration policies are in complete accord with the employment picture in Canada.

## REQUEST FOR PROGRAMS TO RELIEVE UNEMPLOYMENT

**Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown):** Madam Speaker, the minister may have restricted entry in one area but he has increased entry in others. The numbers have stayed the same, and that is sweet comfort for those people in skilled categories who are unemployed today. The minister has been advocating, all across the country, an industrial training program as a panacea to cure all. If the minister took the time to visit his riding and left his little comfortable nest here in Ottawa like most of us do—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member knows that he must ask a question.

**Mr. Lalonde:** He does not know what he is talking about.

**Mr. McDermid:** Madam Speaker, if the minister realized the tragedy that is going on in the country then he might be able to be a little more sympathetic to what is going on in Canada. When will the minister openly join those Liberals who are calling for the Prime Minister's resignation so at least we can give Canadians some hope? When will the minister introduce programs to relieve unemployment?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, all members on this side of the House spend a lot of time in their ridings talking to many Canadians. We are very sympathetic to the situation of those who are unemployed. We are trying to respond in a number of ways and it is for that reason that we have substantially improved and increased the training programs to a total of well over \$1 billion this year.

We have established a number of programs. With respect to the work-sharing program, we have signed over 700 agreements in the last three months. This means that we have been able to avert 18,000 lay-offs. We have a number of job creation measures that are providing direct employment to over 100,000 Canadians. It seems to me that shows that we do care. Rather than simply engaging in the flamboyant rhetoric of the hon. member, who is becoming a professional crepe hanger trying to make the worst out of the situation, we are trying to do the best we can for the situation with the resources we have to help those people, instead of trying to inflame the situation as the hon. member is obviously trying to do in this question period.

## TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown):** Madam Speaker, averting 15,000 lay-offs is sweet comfort to the 1,700,000 unemployed. The minister again talks about the training programs initiated, yet over half of the unemployed are under the age of 24. How many young unemployed Canadians are involved in those training programs the minister likes to brag about all the time?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, it comes as some surprise to me that the Conservative Party is so criticizing of training. As far as most Canadians are concerned, young and old, the ability to get new skills and to adjust to the changing work environment is perhaps the most important asset they can acquire. The fact of the matter is that close to 48 per cent of the people enrolled in our training programs, that is 250,000 Canadians, are under the age of 24.

● (1420)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!