

*The Address—Mr. Laflamme*

amendments made last year by this government to the Unemployment Insurance Act were intended to make it easier for more of the unemployed to receive higher benefits. It is gratifying to point out that the number of unemployed has decreased remarkably all across the country at this time as compared with the corresponding period of the years 1953 and 1954. According to the report issued by the dominion bureau of statistics up to December 20, 1955, the comparison between the weeks ending November 19 for both years 1954 and 1955 shows an increase of 143,000 workers in employment. In all sectors of employment, there has been a decrease of seasonal unemployment.

In my opinion, this thorny problem of unemployment in particular cannot be solved satisfactorily solely by means of legislation and the intervention of the state. Its solution requires the combined efforts of all levels of government, of all municipalities, social bodies and businessmen.

It is very gratifying to observe that all across the country many employers, cities, municipalities, labour unions and social groups such as chambers of commerce, as well as newspapers, are hard at work, and co-operate in efforts to keep employment at a reasonable level throughout winter. For its part, the government has set an example through its departments by keeping a backlog of important wintertime works that can be carried out during that period. Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate all of these groups who are eager to co-operate in the solution of this serious problem and who realize that the government, by direct intervention in this field, could only bring about an incomplete and temporary solution which could possibly have disastrous consequences for the economic situation of the country.

At the last federal-provincial talks on ways and means to alleviate or remedy the unemployment situation, the federal government laid before the provinces a sharing plan to which three provinces have already given their agreement, namely Newfoundland, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island.

Under that scheme, when the number of unemployed in any given province, whether employable or not, exceeds .45 per cent of the population of the province concerned, the government is prepared to share the average cost of relief granted by that province to the unemployed.

The present government has contributed and is still contributing to relieve the unem-

ployment situation through the housing act, which promotes the building of new homes in this country. In 1955, that act, which deals with these two great social problems, unemployment and housing, has made it possible to build in this country more than 125,000 new homes. It is unfortunate that the severity of our climate is slowing down this boom in construction.

Last year, the present government amended this act in order to guarantee loans with regard to accommodation already built. This year, we find in the speech from the throne that parliament will be called upon to vote new amendments enabling and facilitating the building of new low-priced homes while tending, more particularly, to eliminate slum areas and to raise the amounts loaned for the improvement of existing accommodation.

To my mind, the expansion of new home building cannot fail to increase again to a considerable degree this year, because the population as a whole is realizing more and more all the benefits the government is allowing them on this point and also because the growing number of new housing units sprouting up everywhere lessens their apprehensions with regard to the risk involved in a loan which may seem too high for the building of a home.

Aware of its responsibilities and acting with a wise and clear perception, this government thus enables Canadians at all economic levels to realize their dream of becoming home owners while supplying at the same time a great deal of employment.

Canada has just experienced the most prosperous year of its history. Immediately after the last war, some calamity howlers who were opposing the government deemed it their duty to propagate apprehension with regard to the future. This was ten years ago. Now, we have passed through this period of transition from war to peace, which is so difficult. After a whole decade, may we not say now that Canada's constant progress seems assured to the present and future generations.

The opposition has often criticized the means chosen by the government to warrant the advancement of this country. I am perfectly aware that, if an economic recession were to take place, the opposition would blame the government all the more, because they are able to recognize the economic progress of Canada.

The past ten years have shown that the government was efficient in its action. Events are proving it was right.

[Mr. Laflamme.]