

Employment

Let me turn now to the agreement that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) have concluded with their colleagues in all the provinces and territories on initiatives that will assist social assistance recipients to move to self-sufficiency. After all, most of the non-profit organizations around are concerned with those on welfare. Obviously there have been major initiatives to help those on welfare.

We tend to forget that social assistance recipients represent a significant portion of unemployed Canadians. In the past, their participation in federal employment programs has not been representative of their share of the jobless. The agreement that we have signed with the provinces and territories is intended to provide social assistance recipients with the opportunity to participate fully in the Canadian Jobs Strategy. Moreover, the initiatives in this agreement should be more responsive to the needs of individuals at the community level.

One initiative in the agreement states that participation levels for the social assistance recipients will be set in the Canadian Jobs Strategy. As a result, Canadians having serious difficulty in entering the labour market can expect improved job and training opportunities from the increased access to programs in the Canadian Jobs Strategy. This initiative is a major step forward for disadvantaged Canadians.

In addition, another feature of the agreement provides the provinces and the federal Government with the ability to divert resources that would have been used to maintain a person on social assistance to work experience and training programs.

In the February, 1986 Budget, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) announced that the federal Government would provide \$100 million a year for this agreement for the next three years and that this would be matched by the provinces. To date, three provinces have signed agreements; British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. As well, we have developed a national evaluation strategy to provide a cost benefit analysis framework so that we may determine which programs work best during this three year experimentation process rather than just throwing money at the problems, as the previous Government did, and not assessing the worth that is produced.

Other measures in the federal-provincial agreement have also been initiated to make existing programs more responsive to individual needs. One measure deals with changes to the guidelines to the Canada Assistance Plan, a major program in the Department of National Health and Welfare which supports Canada's network of social assistance and social services. While the program meets its basic task of maintaining persons who are on social assistance, it will now provide improved tools to assist those persons in getting off social assistance and into long-term employment. This agreement goes a long way toward minimizing disincentives to work or training for social assistance recipients. The changes to the CAP guidelines permit provinces to allow social assistance

recipients to keep some of their social assistance benefits in addition to their training allowances.

This initiative has provided three important achievements. First, we are spending the money smarter. The money is not just going to help maintain an individual on social assistance, but to enhance the employability of that individual. Second, we are aiding the poorest of the poor and helping them to become employable. Third, we are working in excellent harmony with our provincial counterparts and in community organizations which are most concerned with the poor.

As the Hon. Member can see, the Government is committed to helping unemployed Canadians receive training and find useful and productive jobs. Moreover, this commitment is based on a flexible strategy, that is, one responsive to individual and community needs. As well, these programs are targeted to those regions that are hardest hit and those Canadians that are most disadvantaged. This Government recognizes its role in helping these Canadians and has responded to it by establishing a job strategy that keeps pace with a continually changing labour market and does so with simple, realistic, effective programs that develop our most important resource, the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grondin (Saint-Maurice): Madam Speaker, I just wish to add a little weight to the proposal made by my friend the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart). You will certainly understand why I would not readily support what my hon. colleague was asking for the organizations which had been made by this Government in the job creation field and especially for those from non-profit organizations.

Madam Speaker, you will understand that I, for one, think that one of the basic points raised by my friend the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie was dealing less with job creation than the assurance that non-profit organizations could benefit fully from programs offered by the Government. As a matter of fact, even though I was not then a Member of this House, I had the opportunity to work with organizations in my region, and the basic problem which we faced this summer was that, with the change in eligibility criteria, non-profit organizations in the region were penalized and could not find programs or were unable to find projects which would have allowed them to create a few jobs, to develop and to survive because, without the financing of the federal Government, these organizations would have great difficulties in surviving.

Madam Speaker, I also want to point out to the Parliamentary Secretary that, unfortunately, the federal Government and Quebec have not signed any agreement for training. This absence of an agreement causes problems for the non-profit organizations which would like to apply for training programs.

The examples mentioned by the Parliamentary Secretary are more closely concerned with the Toronto region, while we are proposing programs for all of Canada. As for me, I am more interested in dealing with programs for young people.