

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Thousands of unemployed Canadians are being told by his officials that the training fund, under section 26 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, has run dry. Those taking training courses are being forced to drop out, while others will not even have a chance to start a course.

If the minister is so committed to training, why is he allowing this to happen, and what does he intend to do about it?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): What we are going to do, is within the fiscal framework. We spent, in just the province of Ontario, \$300 million more for training unemployed people in this fiscal year. He is talking about section 26. What he is not telling Ontarians or members of this House is that the 1991 budget for fee payers under section 26 was \$43 million for Ontario and that this year it has been tripled to \$123 million. He is not saying this to the people who will benefit from these courses all year long.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that thousands of people are being turned away. In the past two years the government has chopped \$200 million for training from the Canadian Jobs Strategy budget. Now training money for those on unemployment insurance has run out in certain areas.

How does the minister expect Canada to become more competitive when he is denying training opportunities for thousands of unemployed Canadians? How does he expect unemployed Canadians to find a job in a recession without training?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Liberal Party is finally buying into what has got to be done.

He complains about section 26. Why does he not stand up and admit to Canadians that his was the political party that opposed amendments to the UI act in this House to pass this section 26 training. Now he complains there is

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not enough, when we will be spending three times more in 1992 in Ontario than last year.

• (1450)

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Yesterday I met with officials from his department and 400 of my constituents who are involved in the section 26 fee-payer option to discuss their future in this program.

I would like to put a human face to the issue raised by my colleague from York South—Weston. Yesterday some of my constituents were served notice that their benefits would be cut off as there are insufficient funds left in the program to see them through to graduation.

Will the minister provide the necessary funding to the fee-payer option so Canada's unemployed, who are trying to better themselves and re-enter the work force, can actually do so?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, when we are discussing the issue of fee-payer programs, members must be aware of the fact that we do not guarantee that the UI recipient will be on unemployment insurance for a full three years without there being a review of the program year after year.

Each year, we review our fee-payer participants and ensure that criteria for qualifications are respected. This is what is happening. I acknowledge that there is a great demand out there for more training. That is why in the Labour Force Development Strategy we have entrusted the Labour Force Development Board with the mandate of making its recommendation to the minister of employment which it will be making.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, last year the government did an honourable thing with that program. Now it slams the door in their faces.

[*Translation*]

My supplementary question is for the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Due to the mismanagement of the fee-payer option, some participants in long-term programs will be unable to graduate. Many hoped to register in post-secondary institutions, but the news announced yesterday jeopardizes their career plans.