

Mr. Speaker: I recognize that there can be difficulties. It might be appropriate if the hon. member for York Centre could extend my compliments to the court reporters and ask if they would give the Speaker of the House of Commons some assistance in this case.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mrs. McDougall that Bill C-21, an act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act and the Employment and Immigration Department and Commission Act, be read the third time and passed; and the amendment of Mr. Volpe (p. 5571).

Mr. Speaker: When the House rose at one o'clock the hon. member for Nunatsiq had the floor. He has six minutes remaining, plus five minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiq): Mr. Speaker, statistics obtained from the Canada Employment Centre in Yellowknife by the federation suggested that 15 per cent of all UI claimants in the north had fewer than 20 weeks of insurable employment. Most northern claimants with fewer than 20 weeks of insurable employment were located in the predominantly aboriginal communities of the Northwest Territories.

Construction, a seasonal activity, is negatively affected. In the north construction is a very compressed season. Construction workers make up the single largest occupation group collecting unemployment insurance in the Northwest Territories. Close to 25 per cent of all the UI claimants are construction workers.

The change which increases the penalty for voluntary job leavers is going to penalize unfairly many people who are forced to leave jobs for family reasons that are beyond their control.

Many people in the north who are eligible for unemployment insurance benefits do not receive them. This is certainly true for many Inuit in the eastern Arctic. People do not even bother to apply because the forms

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are complex; they are written only in English or French; mail service is poor; and the system is difficult to understand. Inuktitut is the majority language in the central and eastern Arctic, but the forms are not available in that language. Many women working in arts and crafts, the carvers, and the hunters and trappers generally do not get on the unemployment insurance rolls.

Northerners, particularly in my constituency, also do not have access to the full service employment centres that southern Canadians take for granted. The Kitikmeot region, for example, has no Canada Employment and Immigration officer. At the recent fall general meeting of the Kitikmeot regional council, a resolution was passed requesting such a position. The resolution states that the Kitikmeot regional council requires this position to assist in the development of training and employment opportunities and to enhance the region's capabilities of getting resources allocated to these programs. I urge the government to respond positively to this resolution.

As I mentioned earlier, unemployment rates vary throughout the Northwest Territories, reflecting the fact that there are two economies within the Northwest Territories. In the more developed economies the wage economy is established and the rates of unemployment are relatively low. Yellowknife, for example, has an unemployment rate of about 5 per cent.

In the underdeveloped economies the situation is vastly and tragically different. These are the mainly aboriginal communities, some 46 of them, the smaller and more isolated ones. In the communities unemployment rates are high. They can be as much as 50 per cent or higher.

Half of the population of the Northwest Territories lives in these underdeveloped communities. Every year more than 500 young people reach the labour force age.

In the winter of 1989 the aboriginal unemployment rate was six times higher than the non-aboriginal rate. Unemployment was highest for young people aged 15 to 24. Regionally youth unemployment was 49 per cent in the Kitikmeot region, 34 per cent in the Baffin, 31 per cent in the Keewatin region, 28 per cent in the Inuvik, and 20 per cent in the Fort Smith region. These unemployment rates are staggering. They would never be permitted to go as high in southern Canada, yet they are