

Oral Questions

will have substantially more than 60,000 jobs, because of that Program.

Mr. Clark: Which will last 20 minutes.

Mr. Axworthy: No, that is how long your leadership will last, Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: How long did yours last?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You could not even handle the women.

An Hon. Member: You twit.

Mr. Axworthy: What we are achieving with that Program is taking the \$500 million and being able to multiply that into a substantial addition because of the contributions being made by the Provinces and by municipalities and, increasingly, by interest shown in the private sector. For example, yesterday we signed an agreement with the Province of Ontario. We had initially allocated \$130 million. That Program now has grown to a \$280 million Program and it is our estimate that we will provide, in that Province alone, somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000 jobs to help those most in need.

We have also signed an agreement with Saskatchewan. We have indications from Manitoba and several other Provinces that they will be coming into the Program, so it is our expectation that we will be providing a substantial amount of additional work at the time it is most needed for those who are facing the most severe problems. That was the intention of the Program. We intend to fulfil that intention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1120)

REQUEST THAT PROGRAM BE EXPEDITED

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, if the Minister and the Government ever wonder why people do not believe them when they speak, on October 27 the Minister of Finance said there will be 60,000 jobs created with the NEED Program. Two days ago the Prime Minister said there will not be 60,000 jobs created.

Mr. Lalonde: That is not what he said.

Mr. Crombie: Today the Minister of Employment and Immigration says there will be more than 60,000 jobs created. If there is any difficulty understanding why there is no credibility for this Government, that is as good an example as any.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crombie: Now that the Minister is in the House, let me repeat the question I asked. People who are now suffering unemployment are in need. They want to know when the Minister is going to bring on the jobs under the NEED Program. Why will he not speed up the process and have those jobs available, or at least begin to have them available by Christmas?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, it is important to clear up the misunderstanding that the Hon. Member is trying to perpetrate. In the press conference held by the Prime Minister, he was asked the question by a member of the press: would the money that has been reallocated from the energy envelope not in itself create jobs? As I have pointed out in the past, those funds were for long-term economic investment over a period of several years and may have only created one job for \$300,000 or \$400,000, say on a major pipeline project.

What we are talking about here is targeting in the very immediate future when people are suffering problems and difficulties. We want to apply the resources and money at a time when they will do the most good. That was the whole point being made in answer to that question. We are saying that because of the willingness and the ability of the Provinces and others to join with us in a major effort, and not to engage in the kind of carping criticism we constantly hear from that Member opposite, we will be able to start jobs under that Program before Christmas.

GOVERNMENT PLANS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. It concerns the very serious matter of unemployment. Unemployment is reaching deeper and deeper into the labour force and is now attacking those with years of seniority. The figures released this morning show that 48,000 of the 55,000 Canadians who lost jobs last month are 25 years of age or over. That means many of them are heads of families. With the deteriorating situation in employment and the fact that the GNP is off 1 per cent again in the third quarter, how much longer is the Government going to wait before it takes major measures? Are the unemployed going to be told that they have to wait until next February or March before the Government presents a budget and comes up with major moves?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I remind the Hon. Member that slightly more than a month ago I introduced an economic statement in this House in which I indicated that the Government was allocating \$1.1 billion of additional expenditure in the next few months to cope with the very problem that the Hon. Member has indicated.

Miss MacDonald: It's not coping.

Mr. Lalonde: The Hon. Member may feel it is not enough. I agree it will not be enough to mop up all the unemployment at the present time. I said in my statement that unfortunately we will be faced with high unemployment levels for the next several months. I remind the Hon. Member that this morning the unemployment figures were announced in the United States. Average unemployment has gone up there by almost half a point in this last month. The situation is the same.

Mr. Broadbent: Oh, no!