

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the hon. member has taken what I think we all see to be a very serious situation and tried to turn it into some kind of attack against federalism.

The issue of poverty, especially among our young children and our families, will require the collaboration and co-operation of all levels of government, not one party continually insisting on separation, on breaking the country apart and fragmenting our efforts at a time when what we need is collaboration, co-operation and a coming together.

The real issue of attacking poverty is having all Canadians, all provinces and all regions working ensemble.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

In the same report, the National Council of Welfare pointed out that poverty among young families, mostly among single parent families headed by a woman, is on the rise. The report says that children are poor because their parents are poor. And one of the main causes of this poverty is the shortage of good jobs.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development admit that, far from reducing poverty, the unemployment insurance cuts for which his government is responsible will actually cause it to increase because they force tens of thousands of unemployed on to the welfare rolls each month?

*[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the changes to the unemployment insurance bill introduced last year in Bill C-17 we introduced a special measure that provided a two tier benefit support so that we would provide a higher level of benefits for individuals of very low income who have dependent children so they would be able to receive 60 per cent of a replaceable income compared with 55 per cent, the national standard.

● (1425)

Since that time close to 200,000 Canadian families have been able to take benefit from that second tier of benefits, which means they have been able to add close to \$1,000 of income to their family resources during the year.

That indicates we took into account, in making changes to the unemployment insurance program, that there is a special need, especially for those families which have children. I can assure

the hon. member that as we begin to look at a broader reform of unemployment insurance the same principle of targeting our help to those most in need will continue to be our basic philosophy.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's own budgetary plan says that, as a result of legislative amendments contained in Bill C-17 which reduced the maximum number of weeks of entitlement, there has been a 16.2 per cent decrease in the number of recipients.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development acknowledge that this situation will only continue to deteriorate in the next three years because of the cuts in transfer payments and the implementation of the Canada social transfer, which is nothing less than a veiled attempt to cut federal funding for social programs even more?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I think that the new framework for transfers being hammered out between the federal and provincial governments will be an opportunity for the governments to develop a co-operative and effective approach to combatting family and child poverty. I think that it is an effort to develop a national strategy, a co-operative strategy which both levels of government will use to solve the problem, and I hope that the hon. member and her colleagues will join us in this national effort to fight poverty in Canada.

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*[English]***DIRECT TO HOME SATELLITES**

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Last November the cabinet decided to overrule a CRTC decision and create a blue ribbon panel to review Canada's direct to home satellite policy; I should say a red ribbon panel because it has strong links to the Prime Minister's office.

We understand from leaked reports to our office this back room, closed door review is now complete. To avoid public scrutiny the cabinet's decision will be announced after the House rises for the Easter break.

What decision has the government made with respect to direct to home satellites and why was it not announced before the break?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the statements in the member's preamble to her question are generally incorrect.