them to initiate the analysis and marketing feasibility studies necessary for their communities and to obtain the seed capital to invest in new business opportunities.

It is my hope and ambition that these pilot projects will show how we can expand the whole concept of economic development for native people, as opposed to short-term assistance.

I do not think we should disregard or deny, however, the value of the shorter-term job-creation programs. I put this question very explicitly to native leaders when they were in this city three or four weeks ago at the council of chiefs meeting. I asked whether they wanted us to cancel the job-creation programs and the universal answer was that they did not. They considered them necessary for two reasons. First, they provided work as opposed to being on the pogey. In many cases the work is in and around the reserves, which is very valuable. A number of the projects concern the development of roads, transportation systems, sewer systems, public works programs and so on. The hon. member has visited many of the same reserves that I have and he knows that many of them need substantial public works improvements.

More important is the fact that the short-term job-creation programs also provide job experience in new settings for native people. It is often the first opportunity for them. I can think of a number of projects that I helped get established in my own city when I was working at the university, such as the Winnipeg home improvement project. A LIP grant was used to establish a skill training program in which approximately 80 per cent of the participants were native. We kept track of the program and found that 50 or 60 per cent of the participants found full-time employment. It provided them with their first opportunity to gain on-the-job experience. They acquired certain attitudes and habits which were useful in a new environment.

I do not apologize for the short-term job-creation programs, therefore, and I think we must continue to use them. I do agree, however, that we should shift the emphasis to long-term job creation and in particular allow native people and organizations to make the economic decisions for themselves.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Chairman, I do not disagree with the minister except to point out how cruel it is when someone is taken off the welfare rolls, becomes involved in something positive in the community for a few months, and then all at once it is over and they are back on welfare. That is where the cruelty is.

I have also been involved with numerous projects in Regina and Vancouver and have found that to be a problem. People have to go back on welfare when projects end because there is no other employment for them. They are back to square one but with a higher level of frustration.

The problem of native employment, youth employment and employment for women is tied in to our economic strategy. The minister was right when he objected to the narrow definition that some of the Conservative critics used with respect to job creation. The minister claims that there are all kinds of job-creation programs as a result of investment in industry, special assistance, etc, but that is where we take objection to the economic policies of the government. They are the same type of policies that were practised by the former Conservative government, which are the same as those that were practised by the previous Liberal government. These are policies essentially of constriction, of cutbacks and of lay-offs.

● (1630)

We have tried to solve the problem of inflation on the backs of working people. We have been quite willing to accept higher levels of unemployment because it is supposed to solve our inflation problem. The cruelty is that we have not put into place programs that will help those people who are bearing the brunt of the fight against inflation. We have, indeed, shoved them out into the cold. The puny programs that have been brought forward go nowhere near helping those people that government policies have thrown into the garbage heap of the unemployed.

Could the minister enlighten us as to what the economic policies of the government are in terms of employment? Does the government still accept the notion or the goal of full employment, or is 4 per cent, 6 per cent, or 8 per cent unemployment an acceptable level of unemployment? What is the acceptable level of unemployment to the minister and to the government?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, before I answer the last question, let me point out for the record that the member has suggested the programs we have announced have a short terminal point. As I indicated in my opening statement when I introduced the job-creation programs two weeks ago, in the community development program part of direct job creation, if a program demonstrates its usefulness or its viability then it can be extended and be transferred into LEAP, which is a three-year long employment-type training program. If the member is asked, then he should be prepared to say that there is that option of a continuation of the program. As well, under the community services portion of the program there is a three-year time phase for that program.

In terms of the last program, I would not want to take on the task of answering for the entire economic strategy of the government. But I did indicate, as I have several times in the House, that we are now initiating a review of the employment strategy for the Government of Canada. The task force is now in place. The parliamentary committee will be starting its visits and consultations in the spring, the summer and fall of this year. It is out of that process that we hope to be able to arrive at both an estimate of the changing nature of the job requirements in Canada, and how as a government we can respond to them. I would simply ask the member to restrain his anticipation until we have been able to complete that review.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Chairman, does it mean that the minister is not prepared to give or cannot give us a figure today of what is an acceptable level of unemployment in this country?