

Mr. Speaker, according to the statistics provided by Employment and Immigration Canada, 56 per cent of trainees will take those courses under section 39. Those courses will last an average of 16 weeks. And their costs are estimated at \$234 millions for the fiscal year 1984-85.

Eligible trainees receive unemployment insurance benefits as income support for the duration of the course. The government assumes part of the costs and the employers and the employees the other part with their contributions. But the government alone pays the entire cost of any extension of benefit granted to a trainee to conclude his training as well as the supplementary extension up to six weeks allowed to seek employment. It is a large sum of money. But it is a sound investment in our human resources and an efficient mean of preparing our unemployed for the labour market.

Mr. Speaker, let us now refer to the proposed change to section 39. In its present wording, section 39 deals with the attendance of beneficiaries to training courses which correspond to their needs and may help them to increase their earning capacity as well as their "employability". The submissions are based on the labour market criteria established under the National Training Act.

● (1640)

Bill C-221 would bring one change: instead of attending a training course paid for by the Commission, a claimant would simply be authorized to take a course. It is possible to link courses trainees could take at their own expense with the conditional enrolment policy.

According to that policy, a claimant may, under certain circumstances, attend a training course and receive unemployment insurance benefits provided for in Section 25. Here are the conditions:

- 1) an employment counsellor certifies that the claimant cannot be enrolled in a course under Section 39;
- 2) the claimant cannot find a suitable job in a reasonable length of time;
- 3) the training course suggested would increase his chances of finding a job;

And those are cumulative conditions, Mr. Speaker—

- 4) he would leave the course if he were offered a job.

Pursuant to this Bill, claimants to whom Section 39 applies can receive unemployment insurance benefits or training allowances, whichever are the highest. Moreover, the period of payment can be extended to 104 weeks if the trainee is attending a course.

The proposal is innovative. It is a step forward in that area. We want to make sure that unemployment insurance funds are used in the best way possible.

It also recognizes that training and retraining are vitally important to allow our citizens to participate in the economic upsurging.

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971

Mr. Speaker, as Hon. Members know, since last December the Minister has been holding extended consultations concerning the improvement of the Government's training and job-creation programs. Several interesting suggestions have been received from all sectors of society. With his Bill, the Hon. Member is making a valuable contribution and is keeping us abreast of the times.

In fact, the Bill and its consideration by the House will be a very useful contribution to the review of the Unemployment Insurance Act that was announced on November 8, 1984 and to the improvement of training programs throughout the country.

[English]

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) for introducing this Bill. I regret that the Government has not taken the steps which it promised to take on numerous occasions over the last few months. We heard rather extensive discussion on the part of an Hon. Member on the Liberal benches which seemed to me to be a discussion aimed at prolonging the debate and making sure the Bill was talked out. However, I think the Hon. Member for Montreal-Mercier (Ms. Jacques) made a valuable contribution. She spoke for a sufficiently brief time to indicate that it was not her effort to prolong the debate nor to talk the Bill out.

Anyone with municipal council experience knows of unemployed constituents who have attempted to take initiatives to improve their education and training and, if on social assistance or unemployment insurance, have found themselves threatened with disqualification. If it should happen that under the National Training Act they have to make a choice, they will find that the benefit under that Act will provide them with allowances which are less than social welfare payments. The unemployment insurance arrangements are somewhat better. However, the Hon. Member pointed out one of its significant defects. There seems to be an inclination to deprive the individuals involved of an opportunity to make their own choice with respect to what kind of training or education they will pursue.

I do not propose to take very much time. I just want to point out how consistent the Bill is with a document which was produced by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) last December. It is really quite a marvelous document. Most people who read it will find that it contains a number of quite exciting ideas in respect of providing opportunities for those Canadians who want to work. I think most people would agree that most Canadians want to work and should be provided with opportunities to obtain training and education to provide themselves with the wherewithal to qualify for available jobs. However, I regret that the document which resulted from the discussion of this consultation paper, that is the agreement between the Government and the provinces, while high on rhetoric is slight on specifics. There is very little reference to many of the excellent ideas proposed in the document of the Minister in which key ques-