

Routine Proceedings

rural regions in creating the new economic regions. Our methodology is based on this urban/rural distinction.

In accordance with the new configuration that I have the pleasure to present today, the 48 regions which have existed since 1978 will henceforth be replaced by 62 new regions: 26 metropolitan and 36 rural.

[*English*]

The new configuration is in keeping with the objectives that the government has set for itself. All areas of the country are now divided into a much more homogeneous labour market. With the labour market defined by the new economic regions, we will be able to evaluate more fairly the employment opportunities that exist for unemployment insurance recipients in their areas.

[*Translation*]

Since rural regions and large urban centres are distinct, the unemployment rates in rural areas will be less affected by the economic activity of their neighboring metropolitan areas. The financial impact on the Government will be neutral and may change as unemployment rates change. This redistribution of economic regions was not dictated by financial reasons but by a desire to implement a just and equitable system which makes possible a more dependable calculation of regional unemployment rates.

Mr. Speaker, these new regional boundaries will take effect next January, at the same time as the measures announced by our Government last April, currently contained in Bill C-21.

As the new eligibility requirements and the amount to which recipients are entitled will vary with each 1 per cent change in the unemployment rate, it is necessary to implement better evaluation methods.

[*English*]

The new economic regions demonstrate our government's desire to deal as fairly as possible with those who need to use the safety net of unemployment insurance.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my first reaction to the government's statement this morning is to question why this report was delayed until today, the day after we had the final vote on Bill C-21 dealing with unemployment insurance. As you know, we have been debating that bill for the last several weeks. The government imposed closure. The final vote was last night and today we get the report of the

government on the new unemployment insurance regions.

In order to understand Bill C-21 these new regions were very important, essential to a full understanding of that bill, because the bill implements new eligibility requirements and new benefit periods which are based on the regions in which you live. Yet the government has delayed this report to the day after we passed the bill.

This is typical of the government, which tries to hide information from the public and from Parliament so that we cannot have a full discussion. It is bad enough that the government imposed closure at all stages. We had one full day and two half days of debate on a very complicated and important bill at second reading. The government imposed closure once again at report stage and third reading and we did not get all the information that related to the bill until the day after the bill was completed.

I want to point out that, as the minister said, the last update on unemployment insurance regions was in 1978. But since about 1985-86 members on this side have been asking for an update of regions with respect to unemployment insurance. In particular, my colleague from Westmorland—Kent in New Brunswick has been asking for new regions. What we have heard this morning will not improve the situation.

The government says that the purpose of these new regions is equity and justice for the unemployed. Well, that will not be accomplished by the new map that the minister gives us this morning and I will explain why. It will not be accomplished because we have large numbers of unemployed in regions with low unemployment rates and under Bill C-21 it will be even more difficult for unemployed individuals in those regions to qualify for unemployment insurance.

Let me give you an example. In Toronto the unemployment rate is 3.4 per cent. That is the lowest in the country. It is virtually full employment. But there are still 68,000 individuals unemployed in the Toronto metropolitan region. In Newfoundland the unemployment rate was 17 per cent but the total number of unemployed was 41,000. In Nova Scotia the rate was 10.3 per cent but the total number of unemployed was 43,000. So we note that in Toronto, although there is an unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent, there are almost double the number of unemployed that there are in Newfoundland or in Nova Scotia. Under Bill C-21, because of the unemployment rate in Toronto, an individual will have to work for 20 weeks to qualify for unemployment insurance. They will