

EDUCATION

REPAYMENT OF STUDENT LOANS

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, my motion under Standing Order 43 concerns the plight of approximately 13,000 young Canadians who borrowed through the Canada Student Loan Program to get an education but now find themselves being hounded by Government collection agencies because they are unable to pay back their loans, due to our restrictive job market. The level of youth unemployment today amounts to 21 per cent. The only crime of these young people is that they do not come from affluent families, and they took the Government up on its attempt to provide equal access to post-secondary education regardless of income. I therefore move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow):

That the Minister of Finance declare a moratorium on interest charges to young Canadians who have had to default because there are no jobs for them in the marketplace.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for this motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT—IMPLEMENTATION OF NEED PROGRAM

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, my question, in the incredible absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, is directed to the Minister of Finance. The Minister will know the results of the statistics from Statistics Canada this morning on the unemployment situation. We now have over one and one half million people on the street and looking for work. The unemployment rate is at 12.7 per cent. In the last month alone we have 55,000 more Canadians out of work, on the street and looking for jobs. Clearly, the unemployment situation in this country is absolutely appalling. On October 27 the Minister and the absent Minister of Employment and Immigration announced the establishment of a so-called NEED Program to provide 60,000 short-term jobs. The problem with that Program, as the Minister knows, is that it will not kick in until the end of January or the beginning of February. I would like to ask the Minister would he not now use all of his influence in the Cabinet to move that Program forward so that jobs can be created before Christmas.

• (1115)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member that the unemployment

Oral Questions

situation is very distressing. Even though the actual percentage of unemployment has not increased since last month, this is small satisfaction—

An Hon. Member: No satisfaction.

Mr. Lalonde: —to the hundreds of thousands of people who are unemployed at the present time.

The issue that the Hon. Member has raised is one that we have addressed. The Minister of Employment and Immigration has discussed this issue with me and we have decided to take every step possible to speed up the implementation of the Program. Consultation with the Provinces has been advanced, and I am pleased to advise the Hon. Member that I am informed that the Program will start being implemented this very month, before the end of December.

The agreement signed with the Province of Ontario in particular, this week, whereby the Province of Ontario is going to add \$100 million to our own contribution of \$130 million, will mean that we will be able to start the Program earlier than had been previously anticipated.

I want to assure the Hon. Member that we will do everything we can to make sure that that \$500 million is available to the Canadian unemployed at the earliest possible moment.

STATEMENT MADE BY PRIME MINISTER

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, now that the Minister of Employment and Immigration has come into the House, perhaps I could direct my supplementary question to him rather than to the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Employment and Immigration, when they announced this Program, indicated that it would be a Program primarily directed toward those who are coming off unemployment insurance and are in danger of going on welfare, and it was to deal with the so-called "exhaustees", as the Minister calls them.

Sixty thousand jobs was the promise. Two days ago the Prime Minister publicly indicated that, in his opinion, there would not be 60,000 jobs created because the money that was coming for the 60,000 jobs was coming from programs which already employed people. Therefore, the Prime Minister indicated, contrary to what the Minister himself had indicated, there are not going to be sufficient funds for 60,000 jobs and sixty thousand jobs will not be created.

Who is right? Is the Minister of Employment right, or is the Prime Minister right? Are we going to have 60,000 jobs or are we not going to have 60,000 jobs?

Mr. Lalonde: You are wrong.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, if the truth were known, we