

Oral Questions

government. We have assumed our responsibility in many ways by assisting municipalities to service land by granting rather extensive loans, many of which are not repayable, to try to bring more land on stream. However, on the whole question of reducing the cost, one aspect comes within the parameters of the anti-inflation program, and the other one is under provincial jurisdiction, which we are discussing with great regularity with the provinces.

* * *

HEALTH**REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE NO REDUCTION IN ASSISTANCE TO MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN**

Mr. Mike Landers (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Can the minister assure me that the government's efforts to fight inflation will not include cutbacks in projects to assist mentally and physically handicapped children under the age of six? That is to say, will developmental day care projects be continued?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to state unreservedly that the government does not intend at all to reduce its contribution under the Canada Assistance Plan. These contributions will continue in the future as in the past and they will even be larger since I am discussing with the provinces the possibility of extending coverage under the Canada Assistance Plan to the disabled mentioned by the hon. member.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS**PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF FRENCH MINISTER OF LABOUR**

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out the presence in your gallery of the French Minister of Labour, Mr. Michel Durafour, who is officially in Canada for a few days.

* * *

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**UNEMPLOYMENT—STATISTICAL TREATMENT OF SEASONAL WORKERS—POSSIBLE REVISION OF DESIRABLE LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance, who seems to be doubling as a spokesman on the new figures from Statistics Canada regarding unemployment. Now that the new method has placed seasonal workers in a statistical limbo, can the minister explain how seasonal workers will be treated in the unemployment figures?

[Mr. Danson.]

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if a worker, though he has been working on a seasonal basis, is actually engaged in seeking additional work or is in the work force, of course he will be within either the employment or unemployment figure.

Mr. Saltzman: Since this change of taking seasonal workers out of the calculations for unemployment figures has taken place in Statistics Canada, is the government now prepared to revise its target, which was originally 3 per cent unemployment, but which included at least 1¼ percentage points as unemployment for seasonal workers? Is the government now prepared to revise its figures for desirable levels of unemployment down to 1¼ per cent or 2 per cent?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I am certainly prepared to consider that.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION**POSSIBILITY OF MANIPULATING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND LIP GRANTS IN VIEW OF NEW LABOUR FORCE STATISTICS**

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, but he does not seem to be here, so I will direct it to the minister responsible. Statistics Canada recently submitted statistics with regard to the new labour force survey, and its background paper indicated that data users can and, in fact, are encouraged to formulate definitions of unemployment which are best suited to their particular applications, which to me smells of hanky panky and manipulation, and can call for manipulation with respect to the Unemployment Insurance Commission and LIP. I should like to ask the minister responsible at this time what effect this new labour survey will have on contributions by the government with respect to unemployment insurance, the extension of the benefit period and, of course, what effect it will have on LIP grants?

● (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration who unfortunately cannot be in the House today as a consequence of illness, I shall make a note of the hon. member's question. However, I must say that I do not agree at all with the charge against Statistics Canada. I think such a charge is unworthy of him.

[English]

Mr. Alexander: There is no attack on Statistics Canada. I am just reading from this report and I will just read it again so that the minister will understand it:

... the data users can, and in fact are encouraged to, formulate definitions of unemployment which are best suited to their particular applications.

Some hon. Members: Order, order!