

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, I must repeat that my colleague, the minister responsible for Health and Welfare, has always been interested in this very important issue, as we have been saying for months. A study was ordered and I can, on our behalf, ask the minister, as soon as he receives the study, to table it wherever appropriate.

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[English]

FISHERIES

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister of Employment.

He will be aware that when his colleague, the minister of Fisheries, announced the fish aid package, it was indicated that it was designed to help those who needed it most. He will probably know that the ground rules on the issue have been changed in the past week or so and a whole category of people, indeed all the fishermen on the west and southwest coast of Newfoundland, have been told they are not eligible to receive any assistance or funding under the program pending the outcome of the winter fishery.

• (1140)

He also knows that these people cannot wait until next April without any source of income. Will he call off this perverse toying with people's lives and undertake now to ensure that they will become eligible once again for funding under the program?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, a program has been put in place to try to help those who are living in these difficult times in the fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador and, for that matter, in all of Atlantic Canada.

Certain criteria under the program are being applied. If the member has suggestions, I am ready to look at them, but my understanding is that those we claim are

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now not eligible, it is simply because of the fishing pattern. But I am ready to look at the issue.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, the suggestion is very simple, apply the same rules to those people as are being applied elsewhere in the province.

My supplementary question is for the minister, and this matter comes, even more directly, under his jurisdiction. He will know, of course, that fishermen who have qualified this year for unemployment insurance will not have any source of income under that program until early in December.

These people, because of the very poor fishery this year, have been without income of any kind for several weeks already and are facing another five weeks before they get any unemployment insurance.

I wonder if the minister would undertake to see to it that these fishermen are given some immediate access to income through these special projects under the aid package or otherwise.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am ready, of course, to look at how, with the flexibility that exists under the UI act, we can answer some of these problems. But the UI act cannot be the answer to everyone's problems when they face difficult economic times. The money paid into the UI fund by employers and employees throughout the country is one that has to be managed according to the legislative framework that embodies it. If there is that flexibility within the act, I am ready to look at it as I indicated earlier.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, interest rates have dropped. I listened to the Minister of Finance suggest that there was some simplistic proposals being made by the opposition, yet his predecessor and the Prime Minister both told us on a number of occasions that when interest rates came down and the bank rate came down to a reasonable level the dollar would fall as well.

The Minister for International Trade knows that was said. It even said in the budget documents that the dollar would come down as interest rates fell.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance directly whether or not he is now prepared to tell us when the govern-