

in that area. Although the Minister of Finance said that he had discussed this proposition with all provinces six months ago, the fact is that in Ontario to the best of my knowledge there are no application forms yet available for these projects. We are already well into the month of February, and the maximum advantage to be derived from this legislation will end in the latter part of May.

Mr. Drury: You have not passed the bill.

Mr. Peters: We do not have a bill. What we are talking about here is an estimate that seeks to provide \$350 million over a three-year period. I do not know that it is a good idea to do this in the form of an estimate and for a period exceeding one year, but I am not prepared to argue that point. What I am prepared to argue is that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) is right and that there should be a bill. All Members of Parliament should know what are to be the criteria governing the expenditure of this money.

In some of the communities I represent in the province of Ontario there is an unemployment rate of 25 per cent. I suggest that if any capital works projects are to be started in those municipalities, one of the criteria should be that there be a reasonably high level of unemployment in the area. A sum of \$100 million over a three-year period is roughly \$30 million a year, and this will probably allow 300 communities a \$10,000 grant for each of three years. Thousands of communities in northern Ontario have an unemployment rate of 25 per cent.

It has been mentioned that Quebec will receive \$113 million and that the province has a total over-all unemployment rate of 10 per cent. If that amount is divided up among the municipalities of Quebec, then there will not be much forthcoming in the form of capital grants. The same can be said of the local initiatives program. When we ask people to submit good LIP programs, there is not nearly enough money to cover the majority of them. There is nothing wrong with the projects; it is just that there is not any more money.

• (1750)

If we are to be fair to Members of Parliament and to the country, and if we are to be fair to municipalities, which really will be the ones to take advantage of this provision, we will need to spell out how the municipalities are to apply, on what grounds they can apply and who is to get the money. Toronto, in Ontario, hogs practically all the money available. If the people there decide to build a subway, they do so. Whatever they decide to build or do, you name it, they do it. Anything they decide to build may not do the rest of Ontario much good. It is my opinion, and I am sure it is shared by most hon. members present, that if this measure were to be introduced in a bill, in the normal way, most hon. members would stipulate as one criterion to be followed, the level of unemployment existing in those municipalities which apply for these loans. As the amount of money involved is so small, I suggest that the level of unemployment in those communities would need to be rather high, probably over 30 per cent.

I am violently opposed to legislation of the type now before us. We tried to get rid of what are referred to as dollar items in the estimates. They were statutory items

Supply

and legislative items. I think most people agreed when the committee changed the rules that those items ought not to be included in estimates. Legislation ought not to be introduced in the form of dollar items, because major amounts should not be spent without Members of Parliament being given an opportunity to discuss the issues involving those particular items. We have now passed that stage, and most Members of Parliament welcome that.

I do not agree with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) when he suggests that because someone else did this before or because we may list a number of projects that have been introduced in a similar manner that this is the right way to introduce the project being considered. He knew about this in June of last year and discussed it. I say this because I received, as all hon. members did, a sheaf of papers the other day indicating how the winter capital projects program would operate. The senior officials of municipal departments have known about it, as have officials of the province of Ontario. The matter has been discussed by some municipalities for some time. However, I did not know what was involved. I did not know who was going to make decisions and I did not know what the criteria were to be. I still do not know what the criteria are.

I suggest that we are not very honest in this House if we pass this kind of legislation, important though it is, and it is important. I agree that the three-year provision is necessary, because nothing will happen this year and the money will be applied to projects in the next two years. It takes that long to plan capital projects in most municipalities. However, I think we are dishonest if we pass this kind of legislation as a substitute for normal legislation introduced in the normal way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: This, Mr. Speaker, is a civil servant's dream, because he can make any kind of arrangement he wants with his provincial counterparts. He can make any kind of pork-barreling arrangement he wishes. Believe me, pork-barreling is not exclusively the prerogative of members of any legislative House, federal or provincial. The civil servants scratch each other's back all the time and this is an excellent opportunity to scratch somebody's back. Also, passing this item will not mean that winter capital projects will go to those municipalities most in need. They may not go to those municipalities that can provide the best type of permanent community activity, in view of the size of the expenditure to be made. Projects will be awarded to certain areas after provincial civil servants, in conjunction with their federal counterparts, have decided what is of most advantage to them.

I do not know why the Minister of Finance, who is a progressive, young and energetic person, even though he has been given a huge portfolio, has fallen into the trap of allowing the introduction of this type of legislation by estimate rather than by a bill. Surely, he agrees that criteria ought to be set out by Members of Parliament so that the municipalities can get the maximum benefit from the money. As I see it, we are putting up the money.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!