

*Supply**[Translation]*

The people of Quebec would be better served if the Bloc spent more time trying to understand this bill.

[English]

Instead they are conjuring up fallacies about its implementation.

To address the hon. member's motion directly, I suggest she refer to page 19 of the just published employment insurance guide. I know the hon. member has not seen this document. If she had she would not be wasting the valuable time of the House with this motion.

On page 19 of the guide, under employment benefits, the last paragraph of the first column states: "The legislation also proposes a new partnership with the provinces in order to eliminate duplication and encourage governments to work together to foster employment". It says the federal government will work in partnership with the provinces to eliminate duplication. That also means eliminating overlap; they are, after all, the same thing.

I do not know how much clearer the government can make it. It has been spelled out in the EI guide. I hope that by elaborating I can assist hon. members opposite, who still seem confused, to understand exactly what this means.

The labour market training initiatives under EI are not the one size fits all programming approach taken by previous governments. The federal government will work with each province individually, including the province of Quebec, because Quebecers are Canadians and are entitled to the same considerations under this legislation as are all citizens of the country.

We will work with each provincial government to help it deliver a federal program if it desires to do so or, and this is a key point, where a province is operating a program which will equally serve EI clients we will support that program. I do not know how much clearer I can make it for the members of the Bloc.

If the provincial government of Quebec agrees or if it has an employment initiative which meets the employment benefits criteria of this legislation, we are fully prepared to work with the Government of Quebec to use that initiative to help unemployed Quebecers get back to work as quickly as possible. The same thing applies in every province and territory of the country.

• (1355)

My colleague has already mentioned, but it bears repeating, that the good news is the Government of Quebec has passed a resolution that says it is willing to discuss labour market training with the federal government. Like my hon. colleague, I

can assure members opposite the federal government welcomes this opportunity to work in partnership with the Quebec government for the benefit of Quebecers. The same philosophy will apply when the government is dealing with other provinces.

Atlantic Canadians are very concerned about the impact EI will have on their lives. We understand we cannot deal with Nova Scotia the same way we deal with Saskatchewan. I should know since my grandfather and my mother are from Saskatchewan. My grandfather was an MP from Saskatchewan and spoke often of its concerns. They are not the same problems, they are not the same situations as they are in Atlantic Canada.

We are all Canadians but there are different circumstances in the labour market and they call for different approaches in different parts of the country. That is the beauty of the employment benefit measures under EI. They provide for local decision making and ensure appropriate accountability in local areas. Also, they emphasize individual responsibility and self-reliance. All of these things are much needed in this area.

Media reports on this topic keep talking about cuts to UI as if that is all there is to this legislation. There is so much more. I look at this legislation as a Robin Hood response to a program badly in need of change and modernization. We are doing everything we can to maintain the benefits for those who need them most. We are helping out. We are providing a low income supplement for low income families with dependants so they will be better off in the future than they have been in the past. They will get more employment insurance than they would under the old UI system. They will get more now under this system.

We are aiming at those. It is true we are cutting from people who make \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year and collect UI on top of that. People in my riding have been telling us to do that for a long time. They have been saying people who make \$60,000 a year cannot keep taking out \$10,000 or \$20,000 on top of that in UI year after year, and after only paying in a few hundred dollars. They cannot keep drawing out when they already have high incomes. They will have to learn to spread those high incomes over the full 12 months of the year. That is only fair.

People have been complaining in Atlantic Canada about that, in my riding certainly for a long time. We are hitting those people who really should not be taking UI every year, those with really high incomes. We are preserving it for those who need it most. That is a very important point. That is why I call this a kind of Robin Hood response to this problem.

The Speaker: Colleague, I think I caught you before your next sentence. That is what I wanted to do so I could take you back there right after question period. It being 2 p.m., we will now proceed to Statements by Members.