

Oral Questions

program which we adopted in the House 15 days ago, it will be implemented without delay one year and a half before it was due to come on stream if we had not amended the act.

[English]

RELEASE OF FUNDS

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Prime Minister. I already mentioned this to the Acting Prime Minister, who apparently is not interested in the unemployment crisis we are now facing, and who gives trivial, philosophic utterances in a lazy way.

We have hard evidence to the effect that moneys that could be used for job creation are being held back by members of his Cabinet for political purposes, not to be announced until this summer, at a time when we are facing an unprecedented crisis in terms of unemployment. Now that the Prime Minister is back in Canada I want to ask him if he will not now advise and instruct his regional Ministers to release that money in the interest of the employment opportunities that should be available in our country, and in the interest of those who are seeking work and so desperately need work.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Member says that he has hard evidence of Cabinet Ministers holding back funds, I suspect that what he means is that he has no hard evidence. He is just making it up.

I have looked into this matter since my arrival. I know that the Hon. Member raised the question, or that one of his colleagues had raised the question. Over the weekend I looked to see if there were the slightest grounds for suspecting that there was any evidence. Not only did I not find any hard evidence, I find the contrary evidence. I find that Canada Works constituency funds are almost totally committed already, and the fiscal year is only beginning. Summer Canada funds of \$201 million are 95 per cent committed, and the balance is being approved at the moment as I am talking.

● (1420)

Career Access Funds are being committed at a steady rate of \$3.2 million a week. Funding under Section 38, Canada Works Initiative, is being spent at the rate of \$1.7 million a week.

I go through all the programs, Mr. Speaker, LEAD, Career Access, employment creation grants, contributions, everything is being spent. Nothing is being held back. When the Hon. Member says he has hard evidence, I suspect he is either just starting a rumour, flying a kite, or using the usual rhetorical approach to untruth.

SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES PROGRAM

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the recitation on the part of the Prime Minister, maybe the Prime Minister will be able to stand in his place in

the dying days of his office and give us the assurance—unequivocal assurance—

Mr. Cousineau: Cheap shot.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: These are facts. The Prime Minister is leaving his office. I think one of the final things he should do is make sure that something is done in terms of the Special Employment Initiatives Program of \$40 million. His Minister of Employment has stated on the record that he cannot understand why the regional ministers have not yet given specific direction with respect to that matter and it is being held back. His Minister of Fisheries and Oceans told the Newfoundland Minister of Fisheries that he cannot get the Newfoundland regional minister to pay out the moneys or instruct him with respect to moneys for capital projects until, obviously, the time of the next election. Why have the western grain transportation funds not yet been expended in western Canada?

Where are these moneys that are so desperately needed now for the purposes of finding employment for the unemployed of our nation? Will the Prime Minister give us an unequivocal assurance that he will check to make sure these moneys are not being withheld, because we do have the facts? We've got the goods on him this time.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The Hon. Member talks about facts, he talks about hard evidence, but he gives none, Mr. Speaker. He just talks about having the goods. We have allocated \$1.2 billion plus in this year to create jobs, to fight unemployment, apart from all the job creation which comes out of the announcements which have been currently made, for instance, the American Motors Renault announcement and the Husky upgrader announcement. There are jobs being created, but in so far as direct fund spending for jobs is concerned, Mr. Speaker, all the Hon. Member is saying is that some regional Ministers are telling departmental Ministers: "Look, if you are going to spend money in my province, tell me how you are going to spend it and we will discuss it."

The fiscal year is only three months begun. I tell the Hon. member that, far from holding back, we have in some areas spent 95 per cent or 100 per cent of the funds. It seems absolutely proposterous, pure invention, pure fiction to suggest that we would be holding funds to spend in the next election. The Hon. Member may presume to know when the next election is. I do not.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I know it has to be very soon.

Mr. Trudeau: I know that if this Government stays in office, or my successor decides not to have an election very soon, I know he will be running out of money for the constituency fund. As I say, the Canada Works constituency funds are almost totally committed. What will he spend next fall and next winter? I do not know, Mr. Speaker. I think the problem then will be that the Hon. Member will be saying: "Increase the deficit. Spend more. You spent too much last spring. You spent too much last summer creating jobs". They will change