

*Supply*

that reorganization on the employment centres in their ridings. I think this approach would shed a different light on the subject and be a useful adjunct to the studies prepared by bureaucrats.

Another concern linked to the estimates is the number of national advisory groups at the Department of Human Resources Development. Before cutting back on the number of employees in customer services, the people who provide services to the unemployed in all municipalities, in every single part of Canada and Quebec, it might be advisable to see if cuts could be made in these advisory groups which would be in line with the government's current budget requirements.

We are not saying that nothing should be cut. Obviously, considering the size of the debt and the deficit, we must all do our share. We all have to contribute. When we say all, we do not mean only the people assigned to customer services.

In the private sector, I think customer services would be the last place where they would cut staff. We have to consider what can be done, and I hope the minister will ask all members for their views on the reform proposals, to ensure that the final decision will take into consideration what the situation is in each region.

I was looking at a list of criteria for a Canada human resources centre, a local human resources centre and a kiosk. Some criteria work very well for urban areas and some for rural areas, but there are other criteria that are not considered at all. It is like looking through the wrong end of a telescope.

• (1720)

It says that a Canada centre should have between 75 and 150 employees, but not a word about the customers. I think that the criteria for a Canada centre should include the customers these people will have to serve and then, and only then do we decide on the administrative structure that is adapted to customer needs. In this case, the structure comes first and then they adjust the needs to this particular reality. It sounds rather farfetched, and I think we have a responsibility to represent these customers and take their needs into consideration.

A good example is an employment centre that deals with large numbers of seasonal workers, people who are spread over a vast territory. In that kind of situation, we must realize that when there are a lot more transactions, when there are very busy periods, when programs have to be put in place to give these seasonal workers a chance to find jobs or develop jobs that will give them some additional income, because they are the first in line to apply for these jobs, we need adequate services to do this.

I think it is important for the minister to include in his reform what he said in the documents, in other words, the new structures will be customer oriented and will be based on partnership. And to achieve this, the first thing to be done is to determine

who the clients will be and with whom public servants will be dealing, and whether certain segments of the population or certain areas are more affected by the system and whether the reforms should take that into consideration.

Therefore, overall, while we are waiting for the government to eventually merge the two systems, and we will have to wait until the federal government decides to take the first step and admit that it has no place in the area of training the labour force, in the interim, these reflections aim to ensure that Canadians and Quebecers using employment centres will not be penalized by the decision, and that we will not be faced with absurd situations in which people are forced to travel great distances to obtain a service. The system should run smoothly.

Another element must be taken into consideration. I would say that about 90 per cent of the salaries of people working at employment centres come out of the unemployment insurance fund. That means that the employees who are paying unemployment insurance premiums and the employers who are making their corresponding unemployment insurance contributions are supporting this system. It is they who ultimately pay the salaries of the staff at employment centres. They should therefore have a say regarding the kind of services they will receive.

The way things are going, the government wants to create a sizeable human resources investment fund so that it can intervene in sectors like daycare and services for handicapped people, which both fall under provincial jurisdiction. This will artificially inflate the financial needs of the unemployment insurance commission when the government could easily have decided to take another approach altogether.

Now that there is a surplus in the Unemployment Insurance fund, could we not decide to continue to give people proper counselling services? Could we not decide as well to find a compromise solution which would maintain proper services and, at the same time, permit a reduction in UI premiums? This is one way to create jobs. If employers and employees pay lower premiums, a significant amount of money is then injected directly into the economy. This is a much more active approach to job creation than putting money in funds like the human resources investment fund, which will be bureaucratic and will not quickly find its way back into the economy.

• (1725)

Therefore, in looking for job creation solutions to make better use of all our human potential, the minister should consider the situation and the creation of the human resources investment fund or at least take a look at the scope he intends to give it, so that money may be made available quickly and show up in the paycheques of individual Canadians and Quebecers who earn their living with it and of employers too, who will then be able to