

### Supply

Hon. members of the opposition want to deny people that. They say: "Don't do that. Don't give people the right to self-employment, to start their own businesses, to create jobs for themselves or somebody else".

**Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** They have lost faith in the individual.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** They have lost faith in the individual. Yet that basic benefit was built into the program.

We also built in the basic partnership arrangement for job creation. Job fare is working in New Brunswick today involving 1,000 people from the forestry industry, older workers mainly. They are now back to doing reforestation, rebuilding that resource of the nation, cleaning it up and creating a resource that will be richer for the next generation of people.

Then we have the skills voucher that is available to individuals. That is where we come to an interesting point. We have said clearly in the legislation that in terms of the application of the voucher we will do so only with the consent of the provincial governments involved because it is their jurisdiction. We will not deliver it if they say no. It is not our right to do so. We think it is important that individuals have the right to make that choice. If getting back to work means a three-week program in computer upgrading, they should have that right. If the province says no, I will respect that.

I want to go beyond that. In all the measures I have talked about we are prepared to sit down with each province to work on a business plan of protocol, a year by year arrangement to determine the best allocation of the measures and to eliminate all duplication. Where the province has a program that can deliver that kind of opportunity to an individual who is our client, I am prepared to use it.

This is contrary to what the member for Mercier said. We should not listen to her. Frankly the hon. member for Mercier has an incredible track record in the House of crying wolf on misinformation. A year ago she was saying: "Oh, my God, you have changed the UI system. There will be 200,000 people on welfare". Where did it go? It did not happen. In fact it began to get a bit better. We have to look at her track record.

I make very clear that in the province of Quebec the SPRINT program provides a training voucher for people to go back to work. If the province is agreeable we can use it. Clients who pay a premium and get the benefit can use that direct program. I have no problem with that. It is perfectly good. I do not want to duplicate but that means sitting down province by province to work out the arrangements.

The one test I must have as a trustee of the insurance program is to ensure that those people who have paid into the program are

eligible for the benefits and that they have a chance at being re-employed because that is the nature of the new benefits.

The member is creating a great fantasy of huge standards and intrusions. Once again the prize for fiction goes to the member for Mercier for fabricating, making up, fantasizing and, more important, trying to scare people, fearmongering again. It is unfortunate. In many ways I have a great respect for the hon. member for Mercier. She is a good person and a compassionate person. The problem is that every time we have a debate in the House—

•(1105)

**Mrs. Finestone:** First of all she leaves.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** That is another problem. She does not listen too well. Let us put it that way. Nevertheless everything is filtered through the prism of her separatist philosophy. That is the problem.

She cannot look at a major new program to help unemployed people. She cannot deal with the fact that we want to totally rework federal-provincial relations to transfer far more responsibility to the provinces, to transfer all responsibility for training. She cannot see that because everything is filtered through a separatist black box. It does not allow the hon. member and her colleagues to see the opportunities which exist.

I should like to clarify another important point. The hon. member made claims that this would be offloading on the provinces and that it would create problems. I point out something that has not been deliberately omitted but certainly has not been commented on by opposition members. An important initiative in the legislation is to extend for up to three years to all those who have had an attachment to the insurance system their eligibility for employment benefits. People who have exhausted their claims will now be eligible to start their own businesses with a self-employment program, to get a training voucher or to receive a wage supplement.

This means that 40 per cent of the people presently on the social assistance rolls in the province of Quebec will now be eligible for re-employment benefits. At a time when the provincial government is cutting back on those benefits we are filling the vacuum. That is a very crucial reason negotiation is so important.

There is an opportunity to harmonize our efforts. There is a real opportunity to separate those on assistance from those on the insurance program because in many cases they are the same person. Let us deliver through provincial programs such as APPORT. Bloc members have forgotten that last summer I signed an agreement with the provincial Government of Quebec to contribute to the APPORT program, specifically to test how provincial governments could deliver direct employment measures. Now we are seeing the benefits of that.