

Supply

There are people out there who depend on legislators to bring about positive change to their lives. It is for this reason that I get up in this House convinced that the employment insurance bill the government tabled is a very good bill. It is worth supporting and takes into consideration the very sensitivities that the Bloc Québécois, the Reform Party and Canadians in general have brought forward during the debate on social security review.

What are we trying to achieve with the employment insurance bill? The employment insurance bill recognizes two fundamental things. One is that people during time of unemployment require income security. It is provided in the bill. It also recognizes the fact that there is a different economy out there. Long term unemployment since 1976 has tripled which speaks to the structural changes of unemployment.

People are staying unemployed for a longer period of time. Why is that? Because they do not have the skills required to get the new jobs. We need to have an active measure introduced which is referred to as a human resources investment fund.

• (1250)

The \$800 million human resources investment fund has five tools which include a target income supplement, wage top-ups, skills and loans grants. There are job partnerships and self-employment assistance which has been working extremely well. There have been 68,000 jobs already created. We have lowered premiums to generate job creation which benefits not only small business but also individual Canadians. We have reduced the maximum insurable earnings which again reduces the premiums.

We have taken all those steps because we believe that the system needs changing. We are doing this also with a great deal of fairness.

Low income families will be able to get up to 80 per cent of their average earnings. The 500,000 people who were excluded from unemployment insurance are brought into the system. UI exhaustees who were shut out of the past system are now brought in if they have had an attachment to unemployment insurance in the past three years. Anyone who was receiving parental benefits over the past five years will be able to access one of the re-employment tools which means they will be given opportunities for re-employment.

Above all, we are not only modernizing the employment insurance system, but the net result of these measures through the various measures including a \$300 million transition job fund will be the creation of over 100,000 new jobs for Canadians. We are doing this for the people of Canada who throughout the hearings told us that they wanted a system that would help Canadians get jobs, keep their jobs, a system that would

help the most vulnerable and do it in a sustainable fashion. They too understood that the program as it is today could not be sustained when in 10 years it has gone from \$8 billion to \$20 billion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks, the parliamentary secretary talked about "real Canadians", and then about "real problems".

We on this side also feel we are talking about "real problems", and, in our mind, there is also such a thing as "real Quebecers", and not only Bloc members who are intent on paralysing the government. The parliamentary secretary himself read the resolution passed by the Quebec National Assembly. This resolution was supported and passed by all members. It was supported by the Parti Québécois members on the government side and by members of the Liberal Party of Quebec as well.

Needless to say, the official opposition does not feel isolated on this side of the debate as he would have us believe by saying we are the only ones who do not want to co-operate and discuss solutions.

Let me put a few questions to the parliamentary secretary. Concerning the partnership he was talking about, what does the federal government intend to do about employability development organizations? I should point out that all of them have been advised that their mandate will be over on March 30. What will happen to them after that? After all, they are funded by the federal government. Could he outline the alternatives for me?

Time permitting, could he also tell me what will happen with the program for independent students? Funds for this program ran out a long time ago in many ridings. It is all very fine to have programs, but what good are they when there are no funds? What does the government intend to do between now and March 30 for those people who want to go on training? This is an existing program. What is in the way of the federal government keeping those programs alive until an agreement is reached?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Bevilacqua: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Lévis for his question which deals with an interesting point. He is concerned about what is going to happen with training institutions and the independent studies.

The \$800 million human resources investment fund that we have announced will target five areas. There will be agencies that will have to deliver this program. I also want to bring to the hon. member's attention, and I am sure it is good news he already knows about, the fact that it is not only \$800 million. This will be added to a fund of \$1.9 billion which means that we