

Statements by Ministers

eligible for and volunteers for an employability program that promises to be of benefit, the province and the federal Government will direct to that program the money that would have been spent to maintain that individual on social assistance.

The idea is simple. The effect on the client will be vastly increased opportunities for self-sufficiency. There is no coercion, simply increased opportunity. There is no increase in cost, simply a more creative and positive use of existing funds.

The fourth component of this strategy initiates federal-provincial pilot projects to evaluate new approaches that would promote self-sufficiency of social assistance recipients who face multiple employment barriers. This initiative, funded on a cost shared basis, will involve CEIC in the screening, approving and monitoring of projects to eliminate duplication of those already funded under the CJS innovation fund. Vigorous evaluation techniques will of course be established and results of such evaluations will be shared with all Governments concerned.

Finally, my colleague and I and our provincial and territorial counterparts agreed to collaborate on improving the flow of information and on evaluating our programs and, most important of all, on maintaining the "four-cornered" consultative approach. This four-cornered consultative approach, linking my Department, the Department of Employment and Immigration and provincial and territorial social services and employment Departments is the basis for the virtually unprecedented co-operation that produced our agreement. Its continuation is essential if we are to achieve lasting benefits for people on social assistance.

In conclusion, I would say that this agreement proves the value of open federal-provincial and territorial co-operation. All levels of Government are deeply involved with this issue; it does not bear on one single jurisdiction. The agreement we have made will increase the chances for welfare recipients to break their dependency on social assistance and to find self-sufficiency in stable employment. Together, Governments are going to create opportunities and real encouragement for welfare recipients to participate. The Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services, the Hon. John Sweeney, has described this as "An historic and giant step forward". It is indeed, and I want to thank all members of the House for taking the time to listen to me.

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, first of all, may I begin where the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) left off when he indicated that the new Minister of Community and Social Services for the Province of Ontario indeed called this an historic moment, an historic agreement and a giant step forward for all of us who are in the profession of politics and are here to serve our own citizens.

That comes as no surprise to me because I know that in years past when we have attempted as the federal Government, when the Liberal Party was in power, to reach similar types of agreements, we often found that it was the Conservative Party in Toronto that was the stumbling block to a lot of improvements under the Canada Pension Plan and under the Canada

Assistance Plan, and therefore it does come as no surprise to me that the new Liberal Government in Ontario has agreed to sign this document and bring forward this kind of imaginative proposal.

[*Translation*]

I also wish to point out that the Quebec Minister for Social Affairs, Mrs. Pauline Marois, stated yesterday that this came as the result of the efforts of her Government and that it is clearly an idea which originated in Quebec. I mentioned that because when Mrs. Monique Bégin was Minister of National Health and Welfare, she began with her Quebec counterpart implementing the programs that we have seen today.

• (1520)

[*English*]

I, too, would like to join in congratulating the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) for having reached this type of accord with his provincial counterparts. Politics aside, I think all of us recognize that there were great stumbling blocks under the Canada Assistance Plan. Those stumbling blocks were not only costing the provincial Governments and the federal Government large sums of money, but they were also taking away the opportunity from a number of families to engage in a meaningful pursuit of work. As a result of this type of agreement, I hope that we will be able to find meaningful jobs for those who have found themselves in the vicious cycle of welfare in order to have a meaningful role to play in our society.

I hope that the Minister will take my remarks in the context of being a beneficial criticism of the proposals in his program in which I feel he may find some blockages. I hope that the Minister can overcome them.

First and foremost, we have learned over the last several years that Governments often bring in programs designed for certain target client groups. Those programs fail mainly because we cannot reach the client groups which we were attempting to reach. I hope the Minister will inform the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) to be aware of the difficulty in reaching those target groups, particularly with respect to the target groups which fall under the Canada Assistance Plan.

Second, I hope that the Minister of National Health and Welfare will inform the Minister of Employment and Immigration that we on this side of the House have a great many concerns with respect to the job-creation strategy that will be brought forward to target the group which is presently on welfare and which comes under the Canada Assistance Plan. I say that because if one takes a look at the number of unemployed in our country and the number of people who are on welfare, it will be seen that all of those people are not found in the urban centres of our country. A great many of them are in the hinterland regions. I am concerned that in the job-creation strategy which the Minister of Employment and Immigration put forward earlier this year with respect to Summer Works many of the regional incentives are being taken out of those