

Private Members' Business

• (1115)

The Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives estimates the direct costs of unemployment at \$109 billion for 1993 if we include unemployment insurance costs, lost salaries, additional UI premiums paid by employed workers, lost profits and lost tax revenues. Unemployment is not free: it is not free financially, it is not free in human terms, it is not free to communities and to families.

If every unemployed worker had a job tomorrow, the federal government would collect some \$5.5 billion more in taxes. It would spend at least \$16 billion less in income support. High unemployment is a human tragedy, the federal government's most wasteful expense and its biggest unnecessary tax loss.

Official unemployment is now at 10.3 per cent. Youth unemployment is at 16.4 per cent. More than one worker in four is now forced to draw unemployment insurance benefits at some time in the year and one in three exhaust these benefits before finding other jobs.

Most recent statistics indicate that 42 per cent of workers are employed part time. Many of those are only employed seasonally. Only 20 per cent of working women hold full time, permanent jobs that pay more than \$30,000 per year. Taken as a whole, only 31 per cent of all workers have full time, year round jobs that pay more than \$30,000 a year.

The 25-year trend of increased participation of women in the labour force has been reversed, especially for young women. More women have been pushed into part time jobs and outnumber men in these positions by almost three to one.

The current government has continued to pursue the policies of the past, in particular, those introduced by the former Conservative government. These policies do not come to grips with permanent, structural unemployment.

In this bill, I outline a number of ways that might be considered. There are many others: the labour market policies that I spoke to earlier; the kind of recommendations of labour bodies and other groups to working toward this objective.

A clear commitment to full employment and to a strategy of full employment; building partnerships, setting goals and meeting them, putting tools in the hands of working people, protecting our environmental capital and understanding and rising to the challenges posed by the world economy; these should be the cornerstone of an economic policy.

This bill would be one step toward that cornerstone. I urge the support of this House.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege for me to take part in the debate on this extremely important issue. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for her work over a number of years. I think she has a well earned reputation of striving to better the lives of working Canadians.

I paid attention to her comments. As a government, since the October 25 election, we have worked extremely hard in the past 11 months to bring positive change to the lives of Canadians.

No one in the House has a monopoly on the concerns of the number one priority in this country, which is job creation. That priority of jobs, of achieving employment growth, of ensuring meaningful, well paying jobs for all Canadians, is something that all of us, regardless of which side of the House we sit on, should be concentrating on.

No hon. member, no one party in this House has exclusive interest in improving our economy. The government has truly created an environment where job creation can take place. We are committed to reducing unemployment and opening up the labour force to those individuals who want to participate in it.

• (1120)

The government has taken and is taking steps at this very moment to ensure that Canadian workers from coast to coast to coast have an opportunity to participate in rewarding and lasting employment. From the very beginning of its term in office it has been implementing a well laid out plan to promote economic growth and establish long term, rewarding jobs for Canadians. It has to be done in an orderly step by step fashion.

We started rebuilding at the foundation. We have launched an infrastructure program in co-operation with the provinces that is addressing local needs. This infrastructure program is successful because it focuses on the local needs of the community. It speaks to the issue of effective partnerships, a model for all governments to follow.

The \$6 billion national program showed to Canadians that different levels of government, when they are focusing on the big picture which is to provide opportunity, to restore hope and improve the quality of life for Canadians, can work. Government can be a force for positive change and by facilitating the process of change and the process of building communities we can return to Canadians the feeling that something is getting done for their communities and for future generations.

We are, through the infrastructure program, investing in our future. We are building our roads. We are building better communities. We are investing in those things that Canadians have called for and most of all—I underline this point—we are doing it in partnership.