

Adjournment Debate

homes. Another possibility is to have the rent-to-own principle become a higher priority. It would give people a chance to prove they can be responsible and have a healthy respect for their property. Shelter is an important factor in the quality of life Canadians have come to expect. It is vital to remember that it is a privilege to live in a fine house, not a right.

I would like to thank the Minister for listening to my concerns and those of my constituents and for improving this Rural and Native Housing Program.

Mr. Joe Price (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister responsible for CMHC, I would like to respond further to the matter raised by the Hon. Member on March 6 of this year and again today. It concerns the consultation and participation by Members of Parliament and municipal and local representatives in the delivery of the Rural and Native Housing Program.

The Minister appreciates the Hon. Member raising this matter. He also appreciates the opportunity to comment on this program. The Minister was already aware of some of the concerns expressed. He had already instructed CMHC officials to thoroughly review the matter. On his behalf, I am pleased to say that several important initiatives will be undertaken by CMHC to address the concerns expressed. Some of those concerns were mentioned by the Hon. Member.

CMHC will place increased emphasis on involving the municipalities in the Rural and Native Housing Program delivery schedule. Before introducing units into a municipality, CMHC will consult with the municipal council to thoroughly explain the program's objectives, the client selection process, and the number and type of units it proposes to deliver in the municipality. This will increase the council's knowledge and support of the program and answer any questions the council may have. As well, where the program is already in place, CMHC officials will meet periodically with the local council to discuss any problems which may have occurred.

CMHC will also be looking at additional rental units and the acquisition of suitable existing houses rather than new construction. As well, CMHC is undertaking increased client counselling to ensure that clients are aware of their responsibilities with respect to property maintenance.

Under the agreement signed with the Province of Ontario on February 28, 1986, CMHC will continue to deliver this program this year. On behalf of the Minister, I can assure the Hon. Member that there was extensive consultation with several interested native and non-native groups prior to implementing the new program directions. The opportunity for continued consultation is always available and welcome.

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to this issue, and I thank the Hon. Member for raising it.

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE—DATE OF DECISION TO APPLY REGULATIONS WITH REGARD TO EARLY RETIREES—ENQUIRY HOW MINISTER CAN PRETEND TO HAVE INFORMED THE BENEFICIARIES IN ADVANCE

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, on April 17 I put a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) concerning the date of the decision to apply regulations with regard to early retirees. The Minister gave me the usual answer we have been hearing for months, namely that the decision had been made in November 1984.

• (1810)

Mr. Speaker, in my question I referred to a letter from the Minister of Employment and Immigration, dated November 26, 1985, several months before the effective date, one month and several days, to be exact, a letter in answer to a letter from the Hon. Member for Trois-Rivières (Mr. Vincent), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue at the time. In the penultimate paragraph, the Minister said, and I quote:

I would also like to mention that the regulations as such have yet to receive final approval by the Government. Consequently, the specific details of their application have yet to be determined. I am therefore not in a position to answer your question about applications that will already be in effect on January 5, 1986, and those filed after that date.

There, Mr. Speaker, you have the crux of the matter. It is true in principle that those measures were announced in the economic statement made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in November 1984. After that, we waited until January 1986 to implement the regulations, but we never told the people, those who are supposed to go on advanced retirement, whether those regulations would be implemented retroactively.

I was on the Quebec tour with my colleague for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) and, at each meeting we attended people were not opposing the Government's decision to impose such regulations. What people were against was retroactivity. It would seem that a number of companies were in touch with the Department, some even contacted a few MP's. There were very clear responses. The Minister herself, in her letter of November 26, did not know at that time whether it would be applied retroactively or not.

There would seem to be 40,000 people, at least 13,000 of them in Quebec, who were affected by those regulations. Those people would never have gone on early retirement, they would never have accepted their company's offer had they known that one or two months later their unemployment insurance benefits would be stopped. There lies the whole question.

Again, it is clear . . . I have here a copy of a telegram dated December 30, 1985, from the Director of Benefit programs to Manpower and Unemployment Insurance Centre Offices, and I quote: "The new regulations on pension income have been adopted and will come into force on January 5, 1986, as