

Opportunities for Youth Program

be easier to meet the objective of putting funds where they are needed most.

A special effort was also made this year to enhance the participation of women in projects. To date, 40 per cent of jobs proposed have been for women. Present analysis also indicates that 30 per cent of would-be participants are secondary or high school students, 63 per cent are post-secondary and seven per cent are non-students.

[English]

The largest groups of proposed projects involve recreational activities, 25 per cent, and social services, 20 per cent. Other estimates of projects are cultural, 16 per cent; environmental, 14 per cent; research, 11 per cent; information, 11 per cent, and miscellaneous, 2 per cent.

We are of course pleased by the strong response that the program has received in its second year. This response shows that the government was right when it decided to increase the program's budget by about \$10 million this year. These additional resources should allow us to fund about 3,000 projects and participants should, on the whole, earn somewhat more than they received on the average last year. In other words, we foresee an average allocation of about \$1,100 this year per participant compared with \$900 last year. Unfortunately, many worthwhile projects will be rejected. But it was never intended that this program should be a total answer to summer employment for students. As in the past, a very large proportion of employment will be supplied by the private sector of the economy. And of course Opportunities for Youth is not the only federal program designed to promote useful summer activities and employment. In addition to our own department's efforts to support about 100 hostels across the country and other programs to promote travel and exchanges of young people, special efforts are being made by the Public Service Commission, the Department of National Defence, the Department of National Health and Welfare and the Department of Manpower to encourage student activities and employment under the general heading of Summer '72 programs. The over-all expenditure for the Summer '72 effort will be in the order of \$85 million.

I would like now to say a word about the schedule for processing the applications received by the Opportunities for Youth program administration. All provincial governments have been consulted on their regional priorities and their views will be taken into account during the selection process. Officers of the department for which I am responsible and a staff of over 230 at the program's headquarters will participate in the selection. Processing will be computerized and selection will be based on such factors as conformity to the program's criteria, the numbers of jobs per project, the employment needs of participants and the ratio between male and female participants, geographical distribution, recommendations from people in the community, specialist consultants, provincial priorities and the budgets allocated by region and sub-region.

It is expected that public announcements of accepted projects will be made from April 17 to 27. Each group of participants will be advised by letter of the approval of their projects. Throughout the summer, 100 field officers will be posted in the various regions to provide support

[Mr. Pelletier.]

for the project workers, maintain contact with other community groups and offer resource assistance to projects.

I would ask applicants to bear with us while each submission is studied. We are aware that young people are anxious to know the results. First decisions should be announced by April 17. Groups are requested not to expect answers before that date.

• (1430)

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for the minister's statement, particularly with regard to the progress report on this year's Opportunities for Youth program. There is no doubt that the Opportunities for Youth program both last year and this year is enjoying tremendous popularity with the young people of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The obvious rate of submissions, close to 20,000, is indication enough of the popularity of the program. It also indicates, and this was not mentioned in the minister's statement, the tremendous need of young people for employment this year.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I find it passing strange that the minister would even dare comment on the employment possibilities of Opportunities for Youth without at once acknowledging the tremendous need and growing gap in terms of jobs for students and other young people during this present year. The minister talked about the possibility of employment this summer for approximately 30,000 young people under Opportunities for Youth; yet we know the summer labour force is going to increase by some 100,000 this year to a total of approximately 1,300,000. I see no acknowledgement in the minister's statement in this regard.

While I think all hon. members and many Canadians will rejoice in the opportunities that young people will have to develop their talents and skills creatively under Opportunities for Youth, we must not let this divert us from a basic concern about the need for employment by young people during this present year. We know only too well that during the past two years the rate of unemployment for those in the 14 to 24 age group has been running at more than twice the national level. This is simply not an acceptable figure for a modern country like Canada. Just the other day, a York University sociologist said:

Inadequate federal economic policy theories have given Canada the highest rate of youth unemployment in the industrialized western world—

That sociologist is not a particular friend of members on this side of the House. He was the chairman of the government's own committee on youth, Mr. David Hunter. It is well past time that this government acknowledged, if its total answer to the swelling ranks of unemployed youth is one program or a series of travelling opportunities, that this is not sufficient to meet the needs of this country. We ask, what answers and what action is the government prepared to put forward?