

be funded through reduced debt-service payments which have resulted from lower than expected interest rates.

I would like to talk briefly again about my own area of the nation's capital. There is a report put out by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton entitled, "The Other Side of Fat City: Child Poverty in Ottawa-Carleton".

I get a little sick and tired of hearing some members of this House talk about Ottawa as being fat city. We know that the most vulnerable members of our society, pre-schoolers, have the highest rate of child poverty. We know that one out of six children under five years is poor in Ottawa-Carleton, one out of six children.

We know that 29 per cent of all single-parent families in Ottawa-Carleton are poor. Single mothers have a poverty rate of 33 per cent. We know that there are 5,725 single mothers in Ottawa-Carleton. We know that 47 per cent of all poor single mothers are in the labour force. I know in my city of Nepean, which is considered to have above average income, that there are 2,120 poor children.

For the government to pass this bill it is going to have a tremendous drastic effect on the poor in this nation. Where is the conscience of this government? I plead with them not to pass this bill.

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise to challenge the government bill, Bill C-32, that would seriously restrict Canada Assistance Plan payments in three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

As viewers who may be listening to speeches today will know, the Canada Assistance Plan is a very important program in Canada. It really symbolizes the nature of Canada where we really care about each other and we traditionally have assumed responsibility federally and provincially for the costs of social programs.

Canada Assistance Plan has then been a method by which the federal government reimburses provinces 50 per cent of the costs of all social services. This means of course that it is not just the cost of welfare and social assistance payments, but it is for other social programs that are equally important, such as child care services, especially for children with special needs.

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The Canada Assistance Plan helps to share the cost of centres for battered women and the federal government would reimburse 50 per cent of the costs. It also helps special programs for troubled young people. I know in downtown Vancouver now we have a great concern and youth workers are needed to work with young people, including immigrant youth.

Care for the elderly, programs for seniors, all these kinds of things can be cost-shared under the Canada Assistance Plan.

If the provincial governments and in turn the municipal governments only have a 50-cent dollar to cover the cost of those programs, what choice do they have? They are going to be forced to cut many, many of these programs. It is starting already with the threat of this bill and the cutbacks in transfer payments.

The federal government not only is penalizing three provinces very unfairly and in my opinion breaching an agreement that is a national trust, but it is also cutting back on the federal responsibility in practical ways to pay for social programs.

Canada, as many speakers have said, has always prided itself on being a nation that cares and shares.

• (1250)

Higher income people should pay more, perhaps, toward the costs of social programs right across the country. That is not a large cost. It is not as large a proportion of our budget as people may think.

What is the government doing? It is proposing in this bill to penalize the three provinces that are facing great economic hardship and are in danger of becoming impoverished just as much as some of the poorer provinces in the country. It is cutting back on their Canada Assistance Plan payments from the federal government.

Why is this? It is hard to justify that in these kind of times the government would be penalizing people and through the provincial cutbacks will be hurting the people who are hurt most and least able to defend themselves in this country and they are the poor.

The government has the rationale of course, that by cutting transfer payments to these three so-called rich