

Government Orders

My question is to the member who articulated so well about the despair that many people in his community are feeling. It is the same despair that people in my community are feeling. Does he believe that our focus in this House of Commons this week should be figuring out ways to put people back to work immediately so that once the economic equation is working productively again, it would be much easier for us to meet all the social objectives and values that we have held so near and dear in this country?

[Translation]

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

Yes, I believe that it is extremely important. I would even say it is essential to devote this week and whatever additional time we need in order to see how we can get people back to work for a number of reasons. Obviously, quite apart from the benefits that come from employment, there is a satisfaction that people would feel about being back to work. The impact it would have on the families and on the partner and the children can never, never be underestimated.

I talked to my constituents before Christmas and just recently. The single greatest concern they have is making sure that people who are unemployed are back to work, that they have meaningful jobs. Second, that they are able to keep their own jobs. There is a great fear out there as you see your neighbour lose his or her job that you are going to be next.

It would re-establish confidence in the future for themselves because they would feel "I have had a productive life. My neighbours have. We want to retire with some dignity". That is being attacked as well because there is such a lack of confidence in the country.

The people not only fear for their jobs today, their jobs tomorrow, but their future. As well, they fear for the future of their children. They wonder whether or not their children will be able to get jobs and, if they are able to get jobs, whether they will be meaningful jobs that will tap the potential and the talents they have and whether or not that will be able to continue into the future.

For all of those reasons, I would suggest that we have to spend this week and as much time as we need to develop creative ways to ensure that people get jobs, that people are put back to work and are off social assistance programs, that people no longer need to go to food banks, people can find a vitality, a new reason for living and a new hope that this country will in fact provide for all of those who want to work, who want to contribute significantly to this nation and to its future.

Yes, there can be no more important goal this week than have this whole House attempt to determine ways of getting Canadians back to work and to restore confidence in our nation as we celebrate our 125th birthday together.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I rise to again speak on this bill which is an attempt by the government to pass on to the provinces and, therefore, to the more unfortunate people of Canada budgetary cuts. It is also an attack on one of the pieces of social legislation that has united Canada and brought Canadians together. It comes at a time when Canada is having to debate its very existence.

We had better go back and take a look at what the Canada Assistance Plan is and what its implementation meant to Canadians. There are two or three aspects of it that I have not heard anyone raise in this House. The Canada Assistance Plan sets out very clearly that the aim is the provision of adequate assistance to and respect of persons in need and the prevention and the removal of the causes of poverty.

The act goes on to say that it will provide services like food and shelter, special care homes and a range of welfare services. These welfare services are aimed at the removal and prevention of the cause and effect of poverty, child neglect and the dependence on public assistance. We are talking about services that are directed to the most disadvantaged Canadians.

One thing that is fundamentally flawed about this bill is that it is inequitable in its application. It singles out the poor children and the unemployed in three provinces only, Alberta, B.C. and Ontario, at a time when we are trying to build a concept of national unity. We are being asked to pass a piece of legislation in this House that fundamentally attacks and singles out people in three provinces. It applies a different standard to them.