

We have seen the provinces lose a lot of money—\$41 billion in all. Mr. Speaker, that is quite a pile of money that the federal government forgot.

[English]

The result for provinces across this country has been disaster for health care systems, disaster for educational systems, disaster for people who have felt squeezed on social assistance, disaster for health care, disaster for day care assistance, disaster for people who have counted on support for the disabled. Forty-one billion dollars was lost to the provinces.

For my province of Ontario, this has been something which has been particularly bitter and particularly difficult. The province of Ontario gives each year \$16 billion more to the federal government than it receives back in terms of programs, \$16 billion. The province of Ontario has faced serious difficulties with respect to the immense rise in social assistance payments which the province has faced, because of the free trade deal, because of the fact that the federal government has put unemployment insurance changes into effect that has shifted people quickly off unemployment insurance help, put them instead on welfare assistance. These changes have led to increases in, for example, one of the richest cities in this country, the city of Toronto, of 29 per cent in the number of people on social assistance in the past year. With that increase of 29 per cent, what has the federal government done? It has chosen this especially difficult period to cut back the amount of support which the province of Ontario is receiving from the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan.

In this past year, the province of Ontario has lost in terms of sheer promised commitment from the government of this country close to \$2 billion, money that was promised to Ontario under the Canada Assistance Plan. We look at every other province in this country and see that in eight of the ten provinces 50 per cent of the Canada assistance payments comes from the federal government. British Columbia gets hit. British Columbia receives approximately 39 per cent of Canada assistance payments from the federal government.

• (1230)

However Ontario gets hit especially hard, especially unfairly, in view of the extreme increase in welfare assistance which our province and our municipalities have had to endure. We have seen increases of 29 per cent in Toronto, increases greater than that in the county

of Essex which I represent. The increases there are close to 50 per cent in this past year.

What do we see? We see that for the province of Ontario the level of support going to our province from the Canada Assistance Plan has fallen to only 31 per cent of the total.

You cannot keep a country together by treating one province as the milk cow for the rest of Confederation, by taking an extra \$16 billion a year from the province of Ontario and then turning around to that province and saying: "You have a problem with increased welfare payments. You have a problem because of free trade. You have a problem because of our changes to unemployment insurance that we the federal government put into effect. We are not going to help you. We are not only not going to help you, we are going to make things harder for you. We are going to reduce the amount of Canada assistance payments which you will be able to count on from 50 per cent of the share to the current level of only 31 per cent of the share".

You cannot do that and expect people to feel that it is fair. You cannot do it and expect my constituents and those constituents across the province of Ontario to feel that this is what Confederation is all about. Confederation is about people working together. When provinces have problems it is about the country treating those provinces with problems fairly.

We support this piece of legislation because it gives \$422 million to the poorer provinces that need it in this country. What has happened to that extra \$2 billion that should be going to the province of Ontario under the Canada Assistance Plan? What has happened to the millions of extra dollars that should be given to the province of B.C. under the Canada Assistance Plan? What has happened to the billions of dollars that should be going to all provinces under the Established Programs Financing system promised to all provinces?

The federal government has simply ripped the promises up. It has forgotten about its commitments to the country as a whole. We simply cannot continue as a unified country if we continue to do that. We are going to support this legislation today but I plead with this government to use the next year—we tried to get the government to accept an amendment yesterday—to see to it that all transfer payments are put back on a fair basis in this country. At the very least, see to it that the Canada Assistance Plan covers the cost which the