

Government Orders

provinces are not in a position to provide that type of support.

• (1520)

Another interesting fact, and a shocking one, is that children make up the largest group of those who rely on welfare. My information is that they make up approximately 37 per cent of the total. That is a shocking figure. The aim of this legislation is to adversely affect those people. To adversely affect children, in my humble opinion, and I am sure you will agree, Madam Speaker, if not anything else, is morally wrong.

Additionally, to give some of the facts and figures associated with this particular problem, spending in these areas has increased more than what the cap is going to be, so there will be a shortfall. On average across the country, it is at 7 per cent. Over the last couple of years, Ontario has seen an increase of 15 per cent, and the federal government's cap is at 5 per cent, all of which is totally unacceptable in my view.

There are some interesting facts as they relate to provinces such as New Brunswick which is experiencing the cutbacks to those types of social programs in which federal government involvement is necessary. I quote from a recent newspaper clipping about health care and health care standards in New Brunswick where health and community services minister Ray Frenette made the following comments: "The federal government should not expect provinces to maintain high health care standards if they aren't willing to help pay for it".

Frenette went on to say: "The area most likely to be affected by restraint measures is New Brunswick's \$1 billion health care budget. Federal funding has been needed just to keep pace with the ever-escalating costs of medical care".

"Last year the McKenna government put restraints on doctors' use of medicare systems and scaled down hospital construction plans to save money. Frenette would not say what kind of restraints could be employed in 1991-1992 but said costs would far outstrip the level of funding available."

This is one province that is facing very serious problems in the area of health care standards and if we are attacking those standards, what is going to happen with

the rest of the social safety net in existence in this country?

We all acknowledge that the Canada Assistance Plan is the largest single source of funding for social services in Canada. It accounts for approximately 38.5 per cent of provincial spending. If we put on a cap that is less than what is actually needed, then the shortfall has to come from somewhere. It is going to be transmitted all the way down the system so that if the federal government opts out or cuts back, then provinces will have to pick up the slack. If provinces cannot pick up that slack, it will be handed on to the municipalities.

I know the situation is different in New Brunswick and municipalities are not responsible for social programs, but in other provinces municipalities are responsible. I know for a fact that municipalities in Ontario are facing very serious problems as a result of the social responsibilities being sent down the line. The municipality is the one level of government which is least capable of affording the increased cost but now they will face the largest burden as a result.

I would like to leave the House with the comments contained in an article by Ronald Melchers in *Perception*: "In abrogating its commitment to contribute equally with the provinces to the alleviation and prevention of poverty, the federal government is abrogating the sacred trust of Canada's social programs. CAP is the fundamental and minimum element of Canada's social safety net. Beyond the minimum subsistence it provides there is only the dependency of charity. With the Canada Assistance Plan Act in 1966, Canada joined the advanced nations of the world by accepting the essential responsibility of government for the subsistence of its citizens. With Bill C-69, and an extension of that, Bill C-32, Canada would take a great leap backwards."

There is no question in my mind that we are taking a great leap backwards by proceeding in this fashion with this legislation. We must maintain the social safety nets that bind this country together. It is one of the major threads that makes all of us Canadians, that holds us all together. We cannot end up with a two-tiered social safety net and we cannot end up with a two-tiered medicare system. We must put into place sufficient funding so that all Canadians from sea to sea to sea are treated equally. This legislation will do just the opposite. It is a reprehensible piece of the legislation and the