

Government Orders

• (1700)

This was reported in *Hansard* at page 15776 on March 24, 1982.

Mr. Volpe: I wonder why he changed his mind.

Mrs. Marleau: I wonder why he changed his mind. When faced with that kind of tactic, the provinces will have very little choice but to either cut back their funding of these institutions and therefore post-secondary education students will have to pay higher fees.

In hospitals, the odds are that the increased costs will be passed on either in cuts to services or in increased taxes at the provincial level, or again, in increased taxes at the municipal level when the province has to make some very serious choices as to where they will find the funds to continue providing the level of service which is essential to our people, which Canadians expect, and which they deserve.

Let me also add that this is the third time that the federal government has cut the Established Programs Financing in the last few years. The total loss to Ontario from these cuts will amount to over \$11 billion. I am very well aware, and so are the taxpayers in Ontario, that a taxpayer is a taxpayer. If one does not pay the bill at this level, the province has to foot the bill, and there is only one taxpayer at the bottom of the heap. If that taxpayer's municipal taxes are forced to increase or if his or her provincial taxes increase, whichever way you want to look at it, it is that same middle-income average person who will have to pay the price.

Many of these people are in serious difficulties now, especially in some of the regions in this country where people live on fixed incomes, have retired and own their own homes and are trying to maintain them. They are looking at increased municipal taxes. They are very worried about the increase in natural gas and heating and hydro that the GST will inflict upon them. They are very worried, and with good reason because they do not know where they are going. They wonder why is the government doing this to them. Is there no way of stopping this?

I ask, please reconsider some of these measures. Let us tackle the problem of the debt together, but let us not pass it on to those who can least afford it. It is important that we consider all people and that we treat those who cannot pay with very much consideration, and those who can pay, that we make them pay properly.

The Canada Assistance Plan is the basis for social assistance in Canada. Under the plan, the federal government matches provincial expenditures for social assistance programs. This does not only include what we generally refer to as welfare, but also things like services and living services for the disabled, foster homes for abused children, shelters for abused wives and child care for low-income families. These are all of the things that are going to be curtailed or at least held back in the three provinces affected.

The three provinces affected by this contain about 49 per cent of Canada's poor and they are no less poor because they live in Ontario, Alberta or British Columbia. It does not change the fact that they are poor.

I quote from a press release from the Canadian Council on Social Development: "Poor children will suffer when the federal contribution to the Canada Assistance Plan is capped for two years for Alberta, B.C. and Ontario. The plan provides direct payments to poor people with no other income, 40 per cent of whom are children and half of whom live in the three provinces affected".

Through this measure the government claims that it will save \$151 million over two years, but at what expense? Maybe the government will save it, but the next level will have to pick up the bill, because we are a caring society and we will not allow these people to go without at least the very basics that they are receiving now, which I will admit is not a very large amount.

These cuts are very unfair in terms of the provinces concerned. They are the rich provinces, I will agree to that. But they are also the three provinces which do not receive equalization payments. They are being singled out by this set of cuts. The budget makes no allowances for increases in the number of people receiving social assistance, even though the government's own projections predict an increase in unemployment next year.