

• (1730)

Since then, for over seven years, the Prime Minister and his Tory government have made one cut after another. I heard government members say: "Oh well, you know Ontario, Alberta and BC are very rich. They can afford such cuts." Let me tell you that the poor happen to gravitate towards these provinces. Social programs are very strong in these provinces, at least they used to be until this government assumed power.

I had the privilege and the pleasure of serving in the regional government of Ottawa—Carleton. During my tenure, I sat on the Social Services Committee for five years and had the opportunity to realize how many people were in fact gravitating towards our so-called prosperous regional municipality of Ottawa—Carleton in order to be able to benefit from social services.

[English]

The Social Planning Council for the Regional Municipality of Ottawa—Carleton predicts in the two first years of these cutbacks that the Regional Municipality of Ottawa—Carleton will suffer in the amount of \$600 million.

[Translation]

I am sure that government members will say: "Oh well, the regional municipality of Ottawa—Carleton is very rich." Well, the regional municipality of Ottawa—Carleton has its share of poor people and provides programs like other municipalities. Some of the social programs we provide are:

[English]

Single parent families, mentally and physically disabled persons, the aged, children in care or who need protection because of abuse and neglect, the unemployed, families and individuals in crisis, low income workers, battered women.

[Translation]

The list goes on. I have even seen people who could not pay for their own relatives' funerals. The taxpayers of the region pay for those people.

This means that property and provincial taxes in Ottawa—Carleton, in my riding of Carleton—Gloucester, will go up more and more because when you set a ceiling on assistance, it does not stop there. There are no fewer poor people, welfare recipients, battered women or abused children. It does not reduce their number. The unemployment rate is over 11 per cent. One often

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forgets that people on welfare are not counted. The number of people on welfare is phenomenal.

Is the number of welfare recipients reduced by cutting transfer payments to the provinces? The provinces are caught in a vice. The money spent on social programs comes largely from municipal governments. This means that from now on the municipalities will have to pay more for these programs. It means that people will pay through their property tax, which I think should not be used for this kind of program, because some people have lived in a house for a long time and after a while they are on a fixed income; they can barely survive themselves without going on welfare. They can barely make ends meet and pay their property tax.

So social programs will be further abused instead of making it proportional throughout Canada. It must be paid for. If people are in distress, they must be helped. They can be helped by taking money out of the left, right or back pocket, but money must be found to help them or they are left behind.

Since there do not seem to be such heartless people in Canada, efforts will certainly be made to contribute through the property tax, but it is not the right tax for this kind of service.

We talk about global competition, work, our students having to learn more trades; we talked about free trade with the United States, but now we talk about free trade with the Mexicans. Soon we will talk about competition with the Orient and with Europe. Do we have the students and the skilled tradespeople we really need in our industries? Will cutting education help our industries?

It is a negative approach. We must spend on research and education. It pays dividends. The more educated people are, the more skills they have, the more productive they can be and the more tax they can pay to help the whole machinery of government, the whole government, the whole country.

As for medical services, by cutting federal—provincial transfer payments, are we helping our hospital system or is this Conservative government trying to imitate the medical system in the United States, which is divided into two classes, one for those who can pay for medical services and another for those who cannot and are left out in the street? That is not how we do things here in Canada. We have always spoken of sharing. Our philosophy of life is sharing.