

*Government Orders*

I want to say that one of the things he failed to mention when he talks about the GST and moneys to seniors is that because of the GST they also get a cheque from the federal government that protects people with low income. That is part of the program. He failed to mention that today.

We had not had sales tax rebates for people with low incomes until this government brought that in, I believe in 1986. The Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre brought that in in 1986 and it has been greatly increased over that period of time. Until the goods and service tax came in, in fact, that was increased.

I understand the hon. member's concerns. I have had the same calls from seniors who were concerned about the low increase in their senior citizens pensions. Again, that is because we have been able to get inflation down. In getting inflation down that helps those on a fixed income. These wild increases in costs that we had, which forced the inflation rate up was damaging to our senior citizens. Keeping the inflation rate down is very important.

This bill is about transferring funds to provinces. There are great debates on that. I listen to my hon. friend when he stands up and rants and raves about off-loading onto provinces who are off-loading onto municipalities. Every expenditure in a municipality now is the federal government's fault. Every increase in an expenditure is because we have so-called off-loaded.

I want to point out very clearly that we have increased moneys to all provinces of Canada since 1984 by an average of 5 per cent. Ontario's increase was 6.2 per cent, including the year 1992-93.

I want to make it very clear that increases are going to the provinces, but not the huge increases we used to see. The Ontario government in its generosity was increasing its welfare spending at the rate of about 24 per cent a year. We had no control over any system in Ontario to make handing out welfare easier or simpler.

It was costing 24 per cent more per year and we had to put some kind of a limit on it, so we said we would not increase it any more than 5 per cent a year. I think people want that.

I hear this off-loading story all the time, yet there is just one taxpayer paying the bill. Whether he is paying it

municipally, provincially, or federally, he has to pay it at some level if he is going to get a service.

I do not understand blaming the federal government for all the woes of the provincial and municipal governments. We are going to hear it from the Ontario provincial government when it comes out with its budget, and probably in its Speech from the Throne today.

I spoke to the premier of Ontario for some time yesterday, and his government is coming forth with its Speech from the Throne today. I am sure the federal government is going to be blamed for a lot of things. It is setting us up for its budget as well.

The point is that moneys are increasing to the provinces, not at the rate they would like, but that is natural. It is not going to municipalities at the rate they would like to see it increase from the provinces.

The taxpayer of this country is saying: "Whoa, no more taxes", whether they are federal, provincial, or municipal. The bills keep going up, the spending keeps going up, and governments are not putting any discipline on their spending. The Peel Board of Education in my constituency, which I believe is the largest board in North America, has done some trimming and made some announcements. A lot of people are opposing their cut-backs. That is fine.

But at the same time they are saying we cannot have these large increases and expenditures because we cannot afford them. We have to economize.

So that is happening, and I believe we in the federal government are certainly going to take the rap for this type of thing. It is easy to point fingers and we all do it in political life. We say it is the Ontario government's fault, or the municipal government's fault, or the federal government's fault. It is all our fault.

We are trying to get a common sense approach to government expenditures. That is what this is all about. I must say this bill does help provinces out. It does help seven out of ten provinces with increases in transfer payments. Agreements have been reached between the federal government and the provinces for the next two years on the transfer payment program. Naturally they would like more money. I understand that.

This bill will provide some extra money for some of the provinces and I believe it is most necessary. We will be voting against these amendments as proposed by my hon. friend in the New Democratic Party.