

Government Orders

Saskatchewan has benefitted from this program and I suggest to members in this House and to Canadians that that opportunity is there not only for Saskatchewan but also for every other province.

There has been some comment made, yes an admission, that grants to provinces have increased over the past, but perhaps these increases have not been enough. I am not too sure that anyone has the power, the strength, or the wherewithal to determine when enough is enough, particularly when you are reliant on a pool of funds that is restrictive in its own, and the federal government is no stranger to that dilemma.

The federal government has, and I would like to recite for you for the record, committed itself to an ever-increasing expenditure of transfer payments going to the provinces.

The EPF fund, which in 1984-85 was \$14.5 billion, rose to \$20.5 billion in the year 1991-92, and will go to \$20.766 billion in 1992-93. In the area of equalization the same holds true going from 1984-85 from \$5.5 billion up to the next year of \$8.5 billion. The Canada Assistance Plan is going from \$4 billion in 1984-85 to \$7 billion in 1992-93 and other transfers are going from 1984-85 from \$2.1 billion up to \$3.6 billion in fiscal year 1992-93.

Perhaps expressed in terms of percentages, percentage figures seem to live with people more so than terms of actual dollars. EPF has increased by 4.5 per cent from 1984-85 to the year 1992-93, the equalization funds by 5.9 per cent and the Canada Assistance Plan by 7.3 per cent.

It is very clear that there have been ongoing increases in the transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces. What makes this point even much more important to make is that all of this has occurred at a time when the federal government has dug in and said: "We will reduce our expenditures at a time when others are asking us to increase our expenditures". Canadians generally are asking the Government of Canada to reduce its expenditures and in so doing we have had to limit the rate of growth that has been transferred to other provinces.

I made issue of this just last week in a Standing Order 31 statement where we have been criticized for what is more popularly referred to as off-loading. To curtail the rate of growth, to still include a rate of growth in the

amount of funds going to the provinces, I would suggest respectfully that it is not off-loading.

What is in fact off-loading is very clearly illustrated by what has happened in the province of Saskatchewan, my own home province. The province of Saskatchewan has indicated that grants to municipalities will be cut by 15 per cent, not the rate of growth showing a cut, but starting from an even base from last year there will be a 15 per cent cut in the amount of moneys being transferred to the city of Regina, the city that I had the pleasure of representing for nine years. That is off-loading. That is a fact in spades, in capital letters. That is off-loading.

We, the federal government, have been expected to tighten our belts to show our rate of growth increasing by no more than about 3.6 per cent. The Government of Saskatchewan has come upon us, the residents of Saskatchewan, and said: "Your rate of growth will not only not show any increase but we will cut from the previous year". That is off-loading.

Those are essentially the points that I wanted to get on the record. There has been much said about "if I were there, this is what I would do" without the associated responsibility of providing the answer to the question of where in fact would these funds come from.

Economic realization of difficult times requires some pretty stringent approaches to how one deals with the country's economics. A wish list is not the way to do it. If anyone for a moment suggests that additional funds be spent, a supporting source from where these funds should logically come should accompany those kinds of comments.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to put these on the record.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the member for Regina—Wascana said. He said he would be brief. Well, he was almost brief.

He said right at the end that if I were there, this is what I would do, without a realization of where these funds would come from. I say to him, on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP, just let us go over there. Let us go to the government benches for a little while. We will show you where the funds come from. We will have a fairer system of taxation in this country. We will get rid