

interest. We welcome that initiative from the government side and look forward to it coming forward as soon as possible.

To the issue of today, I am pleased to rise on the motion brought forward by my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. The motion before us today states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government is incapable of providing leadership and direction in the economic and social affairs of the nation and has lost the confidence of this House and of the Canadian people and that, therefore, an election should be called forthwith, in accordance with the Canadian custom, practice and tradition of holding a general election at least every four years.

Canadians know that the fourth anniversary of the Conservative government's election occurs this weekend. I do not know that a great number of Canadians will be celebrating and saying "happy Anniversary" and the likes of that. They are aware because over the last four years the people of Canada have suffered considerably under the social and economic mismanagement of the country by the Conservatives.

It is understandably hard for Canadians to forget four years of being taxed to death, of losing their jobs and of the damage they have received from a never-ending recession. The Canadian economy today is in ruins. Over 1.6 million Canadians are out of work while many more have simply given up trying to find a job. The number of welfare recipients across Canada has steadily increased and will continue to do so as more and more businesses and factories close and as those who receive UI have their claims run out without finding any alternative employment. What is even worse, the evidence indicates that child poverty in Canada has reached critical proportions. According to a recent report issued by Campaign 2000, which represents a coalition of national and community social organizations, between 1989 and 1990 the number of children living in poverty increased by more than 170,000 to a total of 1.1 million. This means that one out of six Canadian children lives in poverty.

• (1410)

In addition, the report states that there are 342 food banks in Canada and that two thirds of food baskets go to families with children. In my opinion, these statistics amount to a national disgrace for our country and the government must assume a large part of the responsibility for what has occurred.

### *Supply*

The city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont—Dundas is a clear example of how the federal government has failed to provide the economic leadership and direction required for Canada. Cornwall has suffered considerably as a result of the recession. Like many other cities and towns across Canada that have been hard hit, Cornwall has received nothing from Ottawa that could stimulate an economic recovery.

For over two years my colleagues from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Leeds—Grenville, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and I have asked the government to implement an eastern Ontario economic development program for the region. The government, however, has chosen to ignore the severe economic downturn that has occurred in communities such as Hawkesbury, Pembroke and Cornwall.

Massive lay-offs, plant closures and job losses have failed to convince the government that a need exists for assistance similar to what the government provides through the FEDNOR program for northern Ontario or the Canada—Quebec subsidiary agreement.

The recession, combined with the GST, the fall-out from the Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the dramatic increase in cross-border shopping, which is itself directly related to the excessive taxes the government has introduced, have all taken their toll on the local economy of Cornwall and other border communities.

Over the past 36 months plant closures have caused over 2,500 jobs to be lost. The unemployment rate in Cornwall is over 20 per cent and the city ranks third in Ontario in the percentage of population on general welfare. Yet, instead of doing something to generate business and investment, the federal government has done virtually nothing.

Given the situation in Cornwall and in other communities across Canada which have suffered similar economic fates, one is truly left wondering how many Canadians have to lose their jobs, how many Canadians have to go on welfare and how many Canadian factories and businesses have to cease operations and close their doors before the government will act.

In its rampant pursuit to control the deficit, the government has plunged the nation into economic chaos. The odd thing about it is that the deficit, let alone the national debt, is hardly being addressed at all. In fact, every time the Minister of Finance has made a forecast