

borne by municipalities levying extra taxes on the backs of property owners.

As we know, our constituents are faced with more than enough taxes right now and simply cannot sustain that. The estimated caseload in Northumberland for this coming year is 20,496 over last year's number of 9,994.

I would like to conclude my remarks with a quote from one of the many letters I have received from constituents who are really fed up with government cutbacks as a way to deal with our deficit. This one comes from the retired associate minister of Trinity United Church, Cobourg, Ontario.

He writes: "If this were wartime money would be immediately forthcoming. Everyone would be working. No one would be hungry. Industry would be humming in the interests of killing one another".

"Deficit? Whoever heard of a deficit in wartime? Who gave a fig about what we spent last year in the gulf war? The moment the war ended, here we go again. We have to bring down the deficit. We have to cut back. We have to balance the budget, and we are being manipulated to think that the deficit is the enemy to the exclusion of everything else".

"What about child poverty, a horror if there ever was one, or families falling apart because of no work, or suicides of the unemployed or of the homeless in the midst of a Canadian winter? Why can't governments, either federal or provincial institute public works programs to repair roads, sewers and sidewalks or do research into alternate sources of energy? There are all kinds of things needing to be done and all these people just waiting to be put to work. Why can't governments use their power and their imagination to pull us out of our economic woes? If governments can do it in wartime with no problem, why not in peacetime?"

"Please be ensured of our enthusiastic support of any such programs you might initiate. We are all sick and tired of cutbacks and more cutbacks. Surely there is another road you can take".

I present that on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Northumberland and citizens across this country who take great exception to the continued cap on our Canada Assistance Plan which benefits those most in need in our country.

Government Orders

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, I also welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate on Bill C-32. The bill will have a significant impact on the constituents of my riding of Cochrane—Superior.

We are going through very difficult times in this country. We are in a made-in-Canada recession and the attempt by the government to revive the economy has been a total failure.

Its obsession to control inflation resulted in artificially high interest rates which caused the recession. The strategy prevented small businesses from borrowing in order to modernize, expand and build up a reasonable inventory. Of course manufacturers and suppliers really suffered in the process and many workers had to be laid off.

The retail chain of Sears has recorded its first deficit since 1950. The Sears company officials stated that this is the worst recession since the Great Depression. When one looks at the current statistics of 1.4 million unemployed Canadians and 2.2 million Canadians on welfare, it explains the anxiety and the despair in the population in general.

What does the government do? It introduces Bill C-32, an act to lock in the federal government's contribution under the Canada Assistance Plan to 1990 levels. Mr. Speaker, you cannot tighten the belt when there is no longer a waistline.

To make matters worse, we are now feeling the effects of Bill C-21 which has cut the qualifying period of UIC from 50 weeks to 42 weeks. Because of this recession, unemployed workers cannot find work and are therefore inflating the welfare rolls. This has a tremendous impact on the financial capacities of municipalities to maintain their services and programs as taxpayers' dollars are directed to welfare budgets. Business leaders in the country are now leaning toward a more liberal approach. They believe that the government's single-minded war against the deficit has actually created a much worse situation. In fact its ill-advised economic policies have brought the economy to a halt.

• (1100)

During a recession the government should temporarily relax its stand on reducing the deficit to preserve jobs and keep the economy rolling as smoothly as possible.