

Adjournment Debate

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, some time ago I asked a question about the government's hypocrisy in announcing a four-year \$136 million program to fight family violence while, at the same time, cutting \$155 million over two years in transfer payments to the provinces. Only \$49 million of that family violence program is to be spent before the next election.

It does not take a mathematician to figure out that the Tories are cutting three times the amount that they are dishing out.

In fact the \$155 million figure for losses in transfer payments is actually the government's own figure. The provinces estimate that they are losing some \$2 billion in transfer payments.

The Canada Assistance Plan funds child care, shelters for battered women, and funds social assistance.

Why is the government fighting the deficit on the backs of battered women, on the backs of children, and on the backs of the poor in this country?

The former finance minister said the government is making these cuts so our children will not have to pay later. But our children are paying right now, children who are alone at home or in haphazard or dangerous child-care situations because there is no child care. Their families cannot find child care. Children who line up with their single mothers in a food bank line-up are paying right now. These are the people who in fact do pay for this government's policies.

The Conservative philosophy fundamentally seems to misunderstand what social assistance is all about. It is not to throw out scraps of money at people so that they can just scrape by, their self-esteem disintegrating day by day. It is there to help people to get back on their feet and to become self-sufficient. It is there to ensure that children do not go to school hungry and that they have a real chance in life. It is there to train people so that they have the skills and the education necessary to participate in the job market. These are investments for the future and you cannot build a strong economy without them. You cannot build a strong economy by leaving children without care, hungry so that they grow up on the fringes

of society, chronically on social assistance or in conflict with the law. This is not the way to reduce the deficit.

The Tory way will only enlarge the deficit as our society attempts to cope in the future with increasing crime and violence in our society. The government has a choice now to help create high income taxpayers for the future or to create another cycle of poverty. In capping the Canada Assistance Plan, it has opted for the latter.

Let us have a national child care program now. The quality, affordability and accessibility of Canada's child care will ultimately determine what kind of future we have for our children when they become adults, not this maniacal bent that the government is on of ineffective debt reduction schemes.

Many women are turned away from shelters for battered women. Children do not have the child care they need. This government has put a ceiling on the Canada Assistance Plan in three provinces in this country. Those children are just as needy as children in any other part of this country. Those women who are battered and abused are just as much in need of shelter as women who are badly treated in other parts of this country. It is time that this government took those concerns seriously and reversed its wrong-headed policy of cutting back on transfer payments to the provinces.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby knows, but I really want to tell the House or just perhaps remind them, that on August 15 the government reaffirmed its commitment to put an end to violence against women with the announcement of the establishment of the Canadian panel on violence against women. The member certainly contributed a great deal of time and effort with regard to the establishment of this panel. It is going to represent Canada's best knowledge, experience, sensitivity and leadership on the issue. It is co-chaired by Pat Marshall from Toronto, Ontario and Marthe Asselin Vaillancourt of Jonquière, Quebec. So we have two very good co-chairwomen.

This panel has a mandate to examine the issues of violence against women through an interactive, responsive and grass-roots type of dialogue. It is going to travel to large and small communities across Canada, making every effort to reach all interested persons, including the victims themselves, the victims of violence, the front-